



COLONEL  
GREATHEART



H·C·BAILEY





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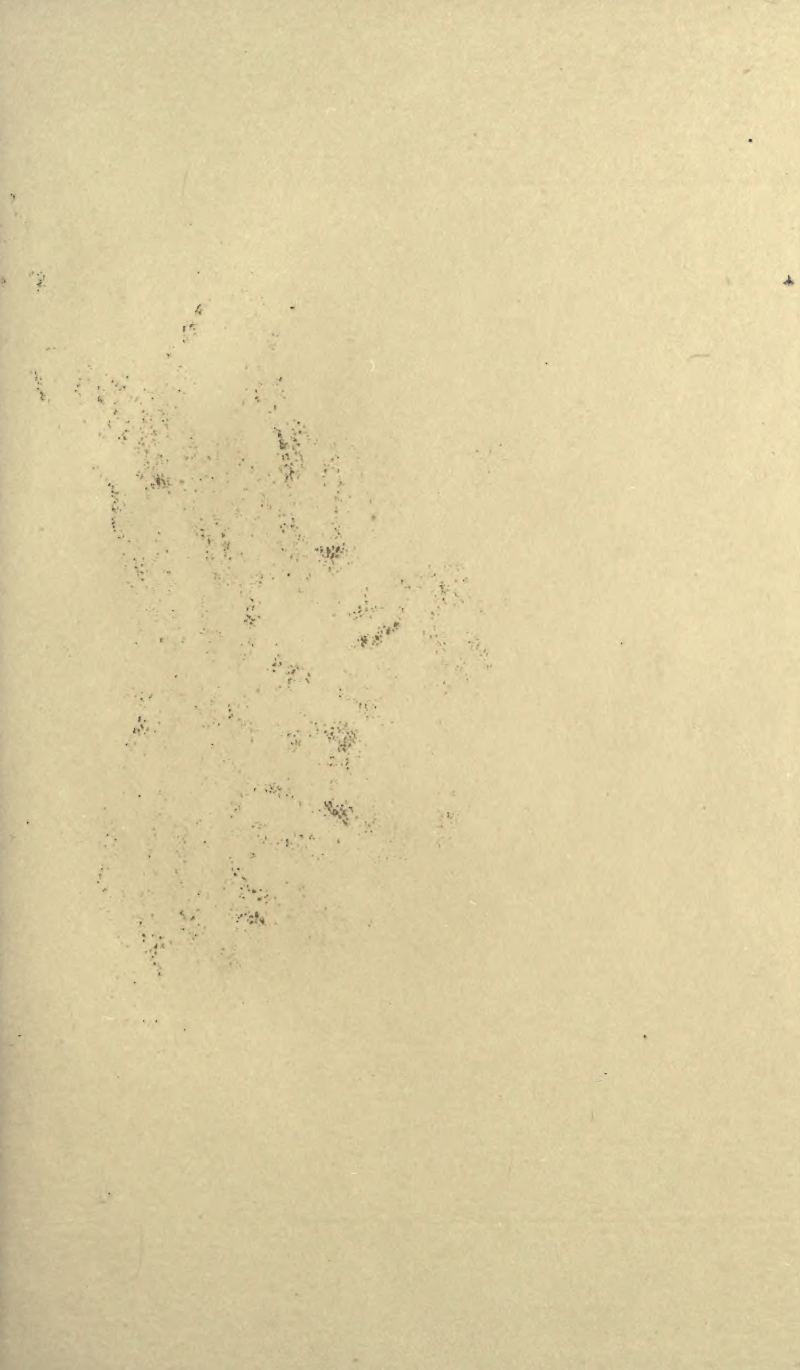




*Colonel Greatheart*



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# *Colonel Greatheart*

By

H. C. BAILEY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

LESTER RALPH

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## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER |                                       | PAGE |
|---------|---------------------------------------|------|
|         | HOW THE WORLD LOOKED THEN . . .       | I    |
| I       | THE LADY LEPE MEETS TWIN BRETHREN .   | 7    |
| II      | THE IMPERTINENCE OF JOAN NORMANDY .   | 16   |
| III     | THE INSPIRATION OF COLONEL STOW . .   | 24   |
| IV      | COLONEL STOW SEES HIS INSPIRATION . . | 34   |
| V       | MY LADY LEPE TAKES OFF HER PETTICOATS | 43   |
| VI      | A PERSON OF IMPORTANCE . . . .        | 51   |
| VII     | COLONEL STOW IS AGAIN INSPIRED . .    | 60   |
| VIII    | UPON THE USE OF A NOSE . . . .        | 69   |
| IX      | CONCERNING THE ANGEL URIEL . . . .    | 77   |
| X       | CORNET TOMPKINS SNAPS AT A SHADOW .   | 87   |
| XI      | COLONEL ROYSTON DESERTS A LADY . .    | 96   |
| XII     | COLONEL STOW MAKES A MISTAKE . .      | 103  |
| XIII    | MR. BOURNE IS SORRY . . . .           | 108  |
| XIV     | COLONEL ROYSTON STAYS BY A LADY . .   | 117  |
| XV      | "WHY COME YE NOT TO COURT?" . . .     | 125  |
| XVI     | COLONEL ROYSTON BREAKS HIS SWORD . .  | 138  |
| XVII    | INGEMINATING PEACE . . . .            | 146  |
| XVIII   | MY LORD DIGBY UPON WOMAN . . . .      | 163  |
| XIX     | NEWBURY VALE . . . .                  | 168  |
| XX      | MISTRESS NORMANDY SEES A FRIEND . .   | 177  |
| XXI     | COLONEL STOW KEEPS THE PEACE . .      | 187  |
| XXII    | LOVERS' MEETING . . . .               | 192  |
| XXIII   | LUCINDA WEEPS . . . .                 | 199  |
| XXIV    | THE HOME OF LOST CAUSES . . . .       | 205  |
| XXV     | THE SURPRISE OF LUCINDA . . . .       | 213  |
| XXVI    | COLONEL STOW WARNS HIS FRIEND . .     | 220  |

# CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                                                       | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| XXVII THE LIEUTENANT-GENERAL FINDS AN HONEST<br>MAN . . . . . | 232  |
| XXVIII AT WITNEY TOWN . . . . .                               | 241  |
| XXIX AT BABLOCKHITHE . . . . .                                | 250  |
| XXX COLONEL STOW RESOLVES TO LAUGH . . .                      | 257  |
| XXXI THE COMMISSARY GENERAL IS DISAPPOINTED                   | 271  |
| XXXII LUCINDA IS WOODED . . . . .                             | 275  |
| XXXIII JOAN NORMANDY PLAYS PROXY . . . .                      | 281  |
| XXXIV LUCINDA IS WED . . . . .                                | 286  |
| XXXV COLONEL STOW IS SHOWN HIS DUTY . .                       | 293  |
| XXXVI COLONEL RICH IS INTERRUPTED . . .                       | 303  |
| XXXVII THE KING TURNS . . . . .                               | 318  |
| XXXVIII LUCINDA IS AGAIN AN INSPIRATION .                     | 329  |
| XXXIX THE KING LOOKS THROUGH HIS FINGERS .                    | 343  |
| XL A CAVALIER DIES . . . . .                                  | 358  |
| XLI WIFE AND MAID . . . . .                                   | 368  |
| XLII THE NIGHT ALARM . . . . .                                | 372  |
| XLIII MOLLY PROPOSES . . . . .                                | 380  |
| XLIV FRIENDS . . . . .                                        | 388  |
| XLV COLONEL STOW IS READY . . . . .                           | 398  |
| XLVI LUCINDA IS LOGICAL . . . . .                             | 404  |
| XLVII COLONEL STOW IS AWAKED . . . . .                        | 409  |
| XLVIII A HUSBAND OR SO . . . . .                              | 418  |
| XLIX COLONEL ROYSTON DELIVERS HIS SOUL .                      | 423  |
| L THE LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SPEAKS . . .                         | 434  |
| LI THE LAST INSPIRATION OF LUCINDA . . .                      | 443  |
| LII LUCINDA GOES OUT TO THE NIGHT . . .                       | 450  |
| LIII COLONEL STOW KNOWS HIMSELF . . .                         | 453  |
| LIV COLONEL STOW EXPLAINS HIMSELF . . .                       | 460  |
| LV THE MASTER OF ALL . . . . .                                | 466  |

*Colonel Greatheart*





# COLONEL GREATHEART

## INTRODUCTORY

### HOW THE WORLD LOOKED THEN

JERRY STOW admired himself. He was at length doing his duty. Also his legs pleased him. Through some years he had cherished ambitions for those legs and himself, linked with unworthy circumstance. Now he was off to the wars and his legs in golden silk stockings.

Before the first beat of manhood in his blood it had been plain to him that he was born to heroic matters. He was for alarms and great deeds and a white blaze of fame. He must plunge into world wars, must win world renown, be a sober Alexander, a Cæsar of respectability. Now, with the spring storms of manhood wild in him, and its first alarming wisdom, he had persuaded even a doubting father that he was not made to work his life out easily in the fat tilth of Stoke Mandeville—was at least no use there. He was emancipated from home. He was out of the worsted and linsey and into silk and brocade. He was off to ride behind the Lion of

the North and hew himself greatness out of the Austrian Papists. Dreams were coming true. His legs and his soul rejoiced. Life was delectable. And his father should be taught to take him seriously.

There was a wild wind of spring, and blue clouds clashed in a gray sky. The daylight was pale, and across it the long rampart of hills stood dull black. Over the dark green slope that swells slowly to Akeman Street the wind smote a scattered army of trees, and roared and whistled its anthem. Old trunks of silver gray tossed their great black delicate crests to the wild music, and the poplars, lean boughs already gemmed with gold, trembled and swayed and cowered. Glad of his strength as the wind came Jerry Stow. His brilliant legs bore him with a lilt; nostril and eye were wide, eager of joy. He seemed even to expect it at once. The sight of Sir Godfrey Weston taking the air according to custom affected him with instant delight, for Sir Godfrey had in hand his daughter. She was then a child in her first teens, and, as I infer, can have been no more beautiful than any clean, healthy girl, but she had, doubtless even so early, gaiety and an air. Certainly she was born to be a queen and might have made no blunder of it. The least nerve of her was keenly alive. She lacked, it may be, something of a child's sweet weakness, but, if she asked you nothing, she promised much. The quick scarlet lips, her valiant eyes, the vivid touch of red in her brown hair, were apt already to make men think of their

manhood. You might guess that it was no more than this child that had made an end of the boy in Jerry Stow.

Sir Godfrey Weston, who saw many things if he did little, saw this, perhaps. There was something of the contempt that made his only amusement on the lean pallid face as he stayed before the resplendent Jerry Stow. Jerry saluted him with awkward profundity. Sir Godfrey put up one finger. The child smiled gay: "Good morrow, Jerry," says she. "Whither bound?"

Jerry Stow saluted her all over again. "I am glad we are met, my lady," quoth he, purely red, "for I am desirous to bid you farewell."

"'Tis a most correct sentiment, Stow," Sir Godfrey agreed.

Jerry disliked the tone. "I am off to the wars, you must know, sir," said he with some magnificence. Sir Godfrey raised level eyebrows.

But the child was delighted. "Truly? Like the stories you tell? And will you be long?"

"I'll not be back in the vale, my lady," says Jerry, conscious of golden legs, "till I am somewhat more than Jerry Stow."

Sir Godfrey yawned. He did not appear to think the ambition extravagant.

"But I like Jerry Stow," said the child.

Jerry Stow appeared to be in some discomfort. "I shall make him better worth liking," said he with more solemnity than the child required.



"You are a fool, boy. Probably God will be with you. Come, Lucinda," said Sir Godfrey.

"But I want to know," the child protested. "Do you think they will make you a prince? Or a duke, perhaps? And will you be very rich?"

"If I live," said Jerry Stow, with his chest out, "I shall win fame. I ambition no more."

The child looked something of a different opinion. Sir Godfrey tapped his chin. "Answer a fool according to his folly, Lucinda," says he pleasantly. "Friend fool, ambition much of the world, desire much. So shalt thou surely live miserably and in misery die. And for the hereafter, happiest are you who have known hell here."

"If I covet honor, sir," cried Jerry Stow, "'tis in an honorable emprise. I would fight for no cause but the right."

"There is none," said Sir Godfrey Weston with another yawn. "'God with us!' roars your Lutheran. 'In the name of the Virgin!' the Papist screams. Fool, do you think God such a fool as to trust His honor to any man? There is no cause worth a man's sorrow, none whereof the victory is well bought by a man's death. 'Tis in the scheme of things no faith shall ever conquer, and thus the fools who believe hammer each other out. Your wise man stands off from all, believes nothing, as he loves nothing and hopes nothing. You have the felicity to be a fool. So again, God be with you. You should amuse Him. Come, Lucinda."

This maker of phrases was something beyond Jerry Stow. He stood at gaze. The philosophy of Diogenes, I take it, was amazing to him even in the end. But the child smiled back at him, and he went through the wind high at heart. Already he felt himself climbing to a nobler estate than was hers of birth, beheld himself her worshipped lord.

Bolder the wind roared, and the blue clouds marshalled heavy in the grayness. It was dark in the beech spinney above the inn, and Jerry, plunging across it, caught strange sounds, heard a ghastly voice moan from the invisible: "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, my wounds stink and are corrupt; yea, I go mourning all the day long. . . ." There came the horrible music of a man's tears. Jerry Stow hurried on, ashamed. . . . "Of a truth I am the chief, the chief of sinners. O Lord, thou knowest. . . . Nay, verily, the Lord standeth up to plead. . . ." A break of light showed the mourner. It was a loose fellow that stood working his hands and boring his heels into the ground. Jerry Stow saw a sturdy red ridge of nose and a coarse fleshy face, swollen and dark. He went on in a hurry, for this Mr. Cromwell, cousin of Squire Hampden, was thought to be possessed at hours. The harsh voice rose higher: "The Lord, the Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people and the princes thereof: For ye have eaten the vineyard, ye beat my people to pieces. The Lord shall repay."

Jerry Stow came out of the spinney to meet the breaking storm. Quick whirls of snow blinded him, and the driven hail cut temple and cheek. All the air was a warring medley of ice.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LADY LEPE MEETS TWIN BRETHREN

**I**T was the year of grace 1643 when Jerry Stow made for home again. War called him. England was rent in twain. King stood against Parliament, Church against Puritan. The second great battle of the free spirit of man against the power of the past was begun. For the sternest fighters were those who strove to make each man in England master of his own life, captain of his own soul. But to the best of their foes it seemed that the war was of mad, arrogant fanatics who would sweep away the good heritage of England and her divine faith. Both were right, it may be, and both wrong, for those who are marshalled on the stricken fields of the world's fate see no more than the spirit and fortune of their own battalion, know not the true peril or the issue of the day. But when the fight is done and the peaceful work of death, men see there has been no victory and no defeat. The battle-field is a furnace whereby all base in either cause is burned out till, when the fire dies down, there is left one fair faith to be the glory and comfort of all men after. But for Jerry Stow and his day the flame was grim.



If you should make for the vale of Aylesbury from a southern port, you would be happy to cross the Thames at Wallingford and come like the men of old years by the Icknield Way. Then you are given the full joy of the woodland hills. By many a mile they stand sheer above you in timeless strength. Serried ranks of trees rise to the sky, beech and larch, that are red and golden yellow in the spring-time, then countless quiet glad harmonies of green, then a wide flame of crimson and topaz and orange before they come to the feathery grace, the black and brown and silver of the wintertide.

The red buds had but just come upon the larch, the beeches waved yet in naked beauty when Jerry Stow rode by. He came with a companion, with state. There were armed followers and led horses not ill laden. He had gained something about the chest also, and the air and habit of command to set off his moustachios. He rode a good horse as it deserved. He was plainly, yet with no parade, the soldier. Still he preserved his nature. The plain buff coat had a touch of original gaiety, a sash of rare blue. You behold him now, a trim fellow of the middle size, with an honest, wholesome, pale face, wherein brown eyes are earnestly glad. His companion is of larger make, big each way. He too is soldierly, but no splash of color mars the neat sobriety of him. He is plump of cheek and handsome, with lips set in demure mirth. He has the complexion of a country lass. There is to me much

alluring in this Colonel George Royston. So they jingled on with their company through the swift wanton April sunshine, as proud of life as the thrushes.

They were close upon the Oxford road where it rises through the woodland defile by Aston Rowant when they alarmed a lady. It was something of a buxom dame that rode with one serving man to her train, and rode badly enough. The sound and the sight of men of war behind her made her vacillate pathetically. Now she turned to gaze, and, misliking them, drove her horse on. Now she looked again and liked them better, and fell to her first easy pace. Then meditation brought doubt back, and she spurred again. But the end of it all was, they came upon her before the cross-roads.

"'Tis the common vice of woman. She thinks she matters to us," quoth Colonel Royston.

"If she had run away she might have had charm," said Colonel Stow, and they drew level.

The lady was of a fair comeliness. She looked at them sidewise. "Are you for the King, gentlemen?" says she.

"He has not that happiness," quoth Colonel Royston.

"For the Parliament, then?" she cried.

"Nor is the King so unfortunate," quoth Colonel Stow.

"I do not understand you, sir," says she, biting her lip.

"Believe me," said Colonel Royston sweetly, "we did not expect it."

"You resent my questions, gentlemen?" she cried.

"Nay, we enjoy the answers," said Colonel Stow with a bow.

"At least, sir, you are in truth no Roundheads?"

"The fashion," said Colonel Royston, "is purely a discord with my complexion."

"Which indeed I admire," says she with some spirit.

"I am wholly of the same mind," Colonel Royston admitted.

"Since we are thus in accord," quoth she, "I would pray leave to be of your company."

There was some hesitation. "The honor, madame, is ours. But I can not think much pleasure will be yours," quoth Colonel Stow.

"Sir, I am a lone woman—"

"I'll swear you are not to blame for it," Colonel Royston muttered.

"—and the country hereby is disturbed—"

"Oh, madame, you shall be protected from anything but justice," said Colonel Royston with ill grace.

"The woman who gets but justice gets nothing," quoth Colonel Stow.

"Indeed, sir," says she heartily, "I want all you can give a woman who can give you nothing. But 'tis not from justice I would be guarded. This is debatable land, and I fear the scum of both armies."

"I commend your equal condemnation," said Colonel Stow.

"Nay, sir," says she with dignity, "I am heart and soul with the King."

"Why grudge him the body, too?" yawned Colonel Royston.

"Sir, he hath all my spiritual part—"

"That should be a husband?" Colonel Stow inquired politely.

"Why—why in truth, sir," she spoke through laughter—then with some struggling emotion—"my husband can not now be with me"—she made eyes at them—"save in my heart."

"Faith, his tribe should not be at large," Colonel Royston agreed.

"I, gentlemen, am called my Lady Lepe, and—"

Colonel Royston's bow seemed to offer his compliments on the name. The two presented each other, and my Lady Lepe smiled on them both. She was indeed comely, though something much buxom, and her eyes pleasantly wicked.

"I have a friend," she went on, "who is—who is more than a sister to me. She is now in sore need, and I only can help her. It is to her I ride. My way is by Risborough, and if you would see me safe there, I—my husband would ever be grateful."

"I love all husbands," said Colonel Royston with enthusiasm. "They are the scapegoats of my sex. If, as you suspect, it is a kindness to him to help you away from him, command us."



"I perceive, sir, you tempt fate. Some day you will be even such a husband as mine."

"Your courtship flatters me," Colonel Royston admitted, "but is at least forbid by several religions. Moreover, to economize in wives were miserly in a man."

"I see that I have to suspect you of morality," said the lady. "'Tis rare in gentlemen who ride with an armed tail. And upon that matter—against whom are you armed?"

"Against the wide world," quoth Colonel Stow, and gave a new point to his beard.

"We fight for ourselves, according to the honorable fashion of High Germany," said Colonel Royston.

"Having learned the same by the side of the great Gustavus—"

"Whom I will ever uphold as the original begetter of cavalry tactic, though certainly of a deplorable taste in psalmody."

"Likewise with Bernhard of Weimar, who would have been a Cæsar if he had ever waited for the infantry and never for women."

"Finally with M. de Turenne—"

"Who is *la guerre même* and no gentleman."

"I applaud your duetto," says the lady with a smile. "You are surely twin brethren?"

"Madame, you insult my friend," cried Colonel Royston.

"Nay, we should like each other less if we were

alike," quoth Colonel Stow. "I ever applaud my antithesis. Faith, madame, already I feel an affection for you."

"The softness of his heart hath ever betrayed him, madame. 'Twas that beguiled him to unworthy wedlock with me. 'Tis one with an unmanly desire to be a savior."

"'Tis one, madame, with an inhuman power to laugh at himself," Colonel Stow echoed.

"In truth, I marked in Jerry a poor relish for humor from the first," quoth Royston. "He could not see the jest when on the night of Breitenfeld some honest Frenchmen were amusing themselves with a broken thigh of mine."

"It is a rudeness to presume the lady interested in your legs, George," said Colonel Stow.

The lady looked at him with some kindness. "And since that matter of the legs you have been brothers in arms?"

"Jerry has been so unhappy. With Gustav Adolf, with Bernhard—a man of my heart if he had only cared to keep alive—with M. de Turenne—till he made himself impossible in desiring to hang a gentleman whom we desired to ransom. We removed the gentleman and ourselves, and are here for England to give us the greatness we deserve. Pray, madame, how lies England?" (Colonel Royston proceeded to get a return for his innocent frankness.) "How stands the war? Propound us the victor."

The lady bridled. "Victor, sir? It were madness to believe that a base mechanic army can stand against the gentry of England."

Colonel Stow put up his eyebrows. Colonel Royston whistled a small tune. "Every man of honor and blood is with the King!" she cried.

"Tira lira," said Colonel Royston. "I have heard tell that the men of religion are against him, and I had rather fight ten men of honor than one with a conviction of sin."

"They are mazed whining Anabaptists," said the lady with indignation. "They have never endured our charge. And what of our generals? We have Prince Rupert, who is the greatest soldier now alive."

She brought their eyebrows up again. Royston said something smoothly dubious. With zeal she went on. She told them of the wealth and munitions of Oxford, the forces there and in the west, and gave each army its place. Flaming anew to each neat hint of doubt, she told of Rupert and Newcastle in the north, and Rupert's new last plan of war: how from three sides the Royalists were to close upon London and crush that halting generalissimo my Lord Essex and put him in the coffin he bore always with him, and bring the King in triumph to Whitehall. My Lady Lepe had vast and curious knowledge of things. . . .

And she did not note that for all their first unsought eager frankness she was telling them vastly

more than she had been told. It was this, perhaps, which made Colonel Royston look kindly upon her when they halted in Chinnor to bait. "So victory is the King's, madame?" said he, with a last skeptic smile.

"Sir," says she vehemently, "'tis as sure as—as—"

"As that you are a woman," quoth he, kissing her hand as he took her from the saddle.

She freed herself swiftly. "Of that, sir, no man shall ever be glad, save one." She languished. Her bosom heaved admirably. "Him I have in my heart," she murmured.

"I wonder if he is in any other," said Colonel Royston, and went in after her, something pensive, caressing a moustachio.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE IMPERTINENCE OF JOAN NORMANDY

THE "Bird in Hand" was their inn. It was a thought excited by Colonel Stow's polyglot train. Alcibiade, a plump Picard, dealt plainly with the hostler. Matthieu-Marc-Luc (thus called because it was ever his task to publish the good news of dinner) flurried the cook. In an upper room my Lady Lepe stood by a little window of bull's-eye glass and watched the hill of larches flush and darken beneath the swift cloud shadow and the wind. Jerry Stow was at her shoulder. From the chimney corner Royston regarded the pair with gentle melancholy.

"So if we would prosper you bid us fight for the King, madame?" quoth Colonel Stow.

She turned upon him. "Nay, sir, if you be men of honor you can seek no other cause," she cried with flashing eyes.

"I am a man of the soil," said Colonel Stow without emotion. "A king is no more to me than my fellow. If he needs me, let him pay me."

"Is your honor for hire?" says the lady, fiercely scornful.



Colonel Stow looked at her keenly. "Madame," quoth he, "what is't you want most in the world?"

Royston was surprised by her blush. "I—I—" she was in difficulty—"a woman tells that to no man but one, Colonel Stow," she said in a hurry.

Colonel Stow bowed. "To come by what I want I must needs win fame and high place. And so I have set my life on that."

"And I mine upon dinner," quoth Royston, and fell a-howling for Matthieu-Marc-Luc, while my lady looked on Colonel Stow more kindly.

"You are no man to fight for canting rebel knaves," said she.

"Fie on it! All the world cants," cried Royston. "Jerry of fame, you of your womanhood, I of my belly—which is at least no phantom. May we all enjoy them!"

And then to help him came Matthieu-Marc-Luc, lean, imperious and melancholy. His genius yearned for a stew, and they had no intellect for it at the Bird in Hand. The lady ate admirably, but else was not amusing, and Royston and Stow, maturing between the herrings and the coleworts a scheme for the abolition of the monarchy, psalmody and small beer, excited her to no gratifying enthusiasm. They were passing from the coleworts to some matter of pickled cherries when a chorus of view hallos interfered. Royston turned languidly. Jerry Stow and my lady, mercurial both, started to the window.

An uncomely throng surged down the village

street. It was a tangled knot of green horsemen foaming on one lean wretch afoot. He had the shorn head of the Puritan, the bands and black gown of the minister. He was protesting in vehement screams from the Hebrew prophets. But the pack of gallant horsemen drove him on with mocking wanton cruelty.

Colonel Stow was stiffening in each limb. "Pah, 'tis no more than a whining Presbyterian," quoth my Lady Lepe, and turned away.

"If all parsons were in Heaven, the world would be better," Royston yawned; but he kept grave eyes upon Colonel Stow, who stood still and tense by the window.

The horsemen drew up by the inn and, tumbling down about their quarry, dragged him into the tap-room. Thence came a weird, lurid din of drinking song and lewd oath, mingled with the threats of scripture.

Colonel Stow, a thought paler, sat down to the end of his dinner. "Who are the gallants in green?" he asked.

"My Lord Goring's regiment," says my lady at once, and Colonel Royston looked from under his eyelashes.

Colonel Stow ate pickled cherries with determination, while below the medley of ill sound endured. . . . It was broken by a new note. Colonel Stow cocked his head to one side. A girl was sobbing. "Some one cries while I dine," said he. "It is an

impertinence." And he pushed back his chair and went out.

My Lady Lepe looked out of the window: "'Tis only a puling Puritan wench," she said with contempt.

"Madame," says Colonel Royston, who was buckling on his sword, "your womanly sentiments perpetually delight me," and he followed his friend.

He found Colonel Stow at the foot of the stair surveying circumstance with equable brow. Beside the tap-room window a girl wept, and Alcibiade, his plump master of the horse, and the lean Matthieu-Marc (who had a rival repute as squire of dames) imparted consolation in several languages. But mine host of the Bird in Hand and some cronies stood aloof and jeered. Colonel Stow came to her. "Your weeping, madame," says he, "makes the ungodly rejoice."

She looked up at him. She was not of the women who are beautiful in tears. She tried to speak to him, and made a miserable ridiculous gulp.

"'Tis very proper in you to say so," Colonel Stow admitted. "But you need not say it again. I am now in charge of the affair. Come with me."

She touched his arm with timid trembling fingers. The brutal din from the tap-room rose louder. "My father!" she gasped.

"Yes, but you are in the way," said Colonel Stow gently. "Come."

Faltering, doubting—but his placidity was with

power—she let him convey her, sobbing, to the door and up to that room where my Lady Lepe sat yawning.

“Madame,” quoth Colonel Stow, “you can be kinder here than I,” and led the weeping girl to her side.

My Lady Lepe shrank back in disgust that seemed to be blended with some fear. “What have I to do with the wench?” she cried.

“Your womanhood, madame, was not made only for men,” said Colonel Stow, and left them together.

The girl looked at my Lady Lepe with a most miserable wet face, and my Lady Lepe flushed and stood staring at her mighty awkward.

Colonel Stow came again to the door of the inn. Standing upon the cellar flap outside the tap-room, he reviewed the position. Mine host rolled up to him frowning: “Sir,” he growled, “be you a Round-head?”

Colonel Stow began to smile. “Your humor has attracted me,” he remarked, “and yet you do not amuse me. Is not that melancholy?”

“I say, sir,” the fellow roared, “be you a Round-head?”

“If I were,” said Colonel Stow sweetly, “I could not be doing what I am. And yet if I were not to be, it is strange that I should seek to be doing what I shall soon have done.”

“And look you,” quoth Royston, tapping mine host’s puzzled shoulder, “though he be not what he

might be in what he does, yet we know that what he has done may be no proof of what he can be. Wherefore we do all hope for salvation." Then they both bowed to mine host—who had taken a step back, and stood gaping.

Colonel Stow took Royston's arm and turned him to the tap-room. "Go in, George. Make them happy," said he. Their eyes met for a moment. Royston plunged at the door and went in with a flourish and a snatch of song.

The drinkers of beer  
Did ne'er yet appear  
In matters of any weight!  
'Tis he whose design  
Is quickened by wine  
That raises things to their height.

He was opportune. The sport of the tap-room had grown keen. The Royalists would have the minister sing for them a lewd song of Davenant's against his church. He steadfastly denied them, and already they had a knotted cord about his temples. Colonel Royston, as he relates, proffered to show them how that torture was done in High Germany.

Outside, "Alcibiade, my friend," says Colonel Stow, "I am waiting for my horses." Alcibiade bounded to the stable, but was arrested in mid-air by an order in French. Thereafter he bounded again. Mine host and his lounging friends guffawed.



Colonel Stow took Matthieu-Marc by the elbow and walked him through the village till they came to the smithy. "Matthieu," says he, "buy me two pounds of tenpenny nails and borrow me a hammer withal."

"The nails—of tenpenny," Matthieu-Marc repeated, and his lean jaws halted wide asunder.

While Matthieu-Marc turned into the smithy Colonel Stow continued to walk at a gentle gait down the road. His eyes wandered and appeared to admire the cowslips and the speedwell. Coming back to the inn with his nails and his hammer, Matthieu-Marc found Alcibiade waiting by the tap-room door. A moment after Colonel Stow came running, in much agitation. At sight of him Alcibiade heaved up the cellar flap and flung it full wide. Mine host was moved to wrath thereby, and lumbered at Alcibiade, growling: "'Od rot it! What be doing, Frenchman?" Alcibiade, who was a man of action, said nothing, but smote with power. Mine host was engulfed. In the same moment he was and was not. From the depths he complained. Colonel Stow by that had his head in at the little tap-room window and shouted breathless: "George, the Roundheads are on us! Alarm the gentlemen! The Roundheads are on us! A regiment of horse!"

"Plague 'found them!" Royston roared, flinging down the cord in which he was making artful knots. "Saddle, gentlemen, saddle!"

The gallant gentlemen of Goring's horse tumbled

through the door in a heap, Royston agitating from behind, and in a heap with frantic oaths vanished into the darkness of the cellar. Alcibiade slammed down the flap and stood on it. Matthieu-Marc swung his hammer and drove the long nails home. Underground the noise was confused.

"You are as neat as Providence, Jerry" said Royston.

"I should like to see them come out," Colonel Stow admitted. "But one can not have everything. It is time for us to go. Slit their horses' girths, Alcibiade," and he ran up-stairs to collect the women.

Royston escorted his amazed minister to horse. "You had best ride with us, parson," said he. "They would doubtless like to see you again, but one must be selfish at times." But the minister was dazed to dumbness.

With him mounted on one of the led horses, with his daughter up behind Colonel Stow, they rode away. The loungers of the inn yard showed some timorous ill will, my Lady Lepe no timorous disgust at the turn of affairs, but neither affected the tranquillity of Colonel Stow. They had drawn clear of the village when the minister recovered speech. "Sir," says he to Royston, "I deemed you a man of Belial, and by the grace of God you have wrought me a great deliverance. Pray, who are you?"

"I wonder if you have helped us to find out," said Colonel Royston.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE INSPIRATION OF COLONEL STOW

COLONEL STOW saw a full troop more of Goring's green horsemen coming down on the village from Thame, and quickened his pace.

"You are well out of that parish, parson," quoth Colonel Royston, "and it will be some while before you are in it again."

The minister plainly cared nothing for that, nothing for the home he could not save. Never a man grieved less for worldly ruin. There was a wild joy in his eyes. He was throbbing with some glad spiritual orgasm. After a while he lifted up his voice and made a joyful noise. At once Colonel Royston regretted his salvation, and my Lady Lepe snorted at him. But the minister saw nothing, heard nothing in this world but himself.

Had not the Lord been on our side  
May Israel now say ;  
Had not the Lord been on our side  
When men rose us to slay ;  
They had us swallowed quick when as  
Their wrath 'gainst us did flame ;  
Waters had covered us ; our soul  
Had sunk beneath the stream.

And many more verses came before he broke off with the jerk of his beginning and, "Sir," he cried, "the hand of the Lord is in this. The Lord will not suffer me to dwell in peace lest I wax fat. He hath appointed me my portion elsewhere. I will go ride with the host and minister unto them till they that persecuted the saints be cast down and this poor land's iniquity purged away.

'He that in Heaven sits shall laugh;  
The Lord shall scorn them all.  
Then shall He speak to them in wrath,  
In rage He vex them shall.' "

My Lady Lepe made a noise that resembled a profane oath. Then, observing Colonel Royston moved to gentle mirth and the minister's keen eyes set upon her, she blushed notably.

"Father,"—from behind Colonel Stow came a pitiful voice,—“father, shall we not win home again?”

"Nay, the Philistines are upon us. We are cast out. We are wanderers upon the earth. Let God's glory be magnified thereby." I can conceive that Colonel Royston admired the man's contempt of all ease. For himself was not made like that.

"It is hard," the girl murmured.

"Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Let us give thanks that we are accounted worthy to suffer. Yet my heart is woe for my poor sheep in Chinnor left without a shepherd."

"They might have come to aid us," the girl complained.

"You had perhaps sung to them," quoth my Lady Lepe sourly.

Again she drew the minister's eyes, but met them now with a haughty contempt. He turned in dignity to Royston. "Sir, I am John Normandy, a poor servant of God and preacher of the Word. In whose company am I?"

"Myself am George Royston, who serve no one but myself. My friend is Colonel Stow, who serves all men better than they deserve. And this is my Lady Lepe, who serves her husband by her absence."

It was my Lady Lepe who consumed the minister's attention. With his deep keen eyes on her—and indeed she rode ill—"Pray, whither are you bound?" he asked.

Colonel Stow answered for her: "We make for Risborough, and thence Stoke Mandeville."

That second name was news for my Lady Lepe, too. It seemed to Royston that both she and the minister were moved by it. The minister turned to Royston. "Prithee, a word apart," and Royston's demure mirth growing more determined, he spurred on ahead with him. Colonel Royston foreboded events, and events to him were all amusing. "I would be plain with you," says the minister, out of earshot of the rest. "From your service to me I judge you children of light. You have surely no kindness for malignants?"



Colonel Royston felt a confidence impending. He made himself smooth. "Sir," says he, "inquire of the gentlemen in the cellar."

"It was a godly deed," said the minister naïvely. "Sir, I doubt not your honesty. Prithee, how came this woman of your company? Know you aught of her?"

Colonel Royston looked under his eyelashes. But his tone was of pure virtue: "When a woman asks protection of man through a disturbed country, what man can deny her?"

"Hark in your ear!" the minister came close. "What surety have you that she be a woman?"

Colonel Royston, who had a reasonable confidence that she was not, exhibited all decent distress. "You alarm me. You appal me. But this is surely a jest. Sir, it does not become your office."

The minister was gratified. "Sir, you are a man of conscience. Believe me, I jest not. What men dare do men must reprove."

"It is indeed a grateful task and savory," Royston agreed with unction.

"Know then, sir, there is at Stoke Mandeville a Moabitish woman men call Lucinda Weston." The minister, consumed with righteousness, did not mark the shift of Colonel Royston's eyes. "'Tis well known that she hath been commonly visited from Oxford by a malignant who comes in the clothes of a woman that he may be safe from the godly armies at Aylesbury and Wycombe. I do notify you, sir, I

suspicion that you have this sinner in your company."

Colonel Royston was perhaps as shocked as he seemed. "And this Mistress Lucinda Weston," says he gravely, "what may be her relation with the gentleman?"

"Sir," quoth the minister severely, "let us pray to be preserved from the imagination of ill."

"By all means," Colonel Royston agreed, "but life will become dull."

"'Tis said they are betrothed," said the minister with a sigh.

"This innocence disheartens."

"Sir, I opine no good thing of a man thus unseemly disguised." The minister cleared his throat for a sermon.

Colonel Royston intervened in a hurry. "Yet many men would be harmless women," quoth he. "And some wearing women comfortable men. 'Tis sorrow one can not change the sex with the breeches. If husband could be wife, wife husband by turns, how would conjugal felicities be multiplied." Then, seeing that the imminent sermon was fairly overwhelmed, he broke off. "But I meddle with the creation. I go astray. Pray, sir, where are you going?"

The minister plainly found the agility of Colonel Royston's mind distressful. He breathed heavily. "Sir," says he, "I have it in mind to go to Aylesbury. I have a friendship from of old with godly Master

Skippon, the sergeant major general, and will pray his aid in my mission to be one of them that minister to the host. Yea, and moreover, I will bear them tidings of this malignant that rides in a woman's coats."

There was something of admiration in Colonel Royston's face as he surveyed the minister. He ever loved men who made him busy. "Sir," says he, "you are a refreshment. I am vastly the better of you already. You make me rejoice in the construction of life."

Whereat the minister was moved to spiritual song:

Praise ye the Lord; for it is good  
Praise to our Lord to sing,  
For it is pleasant; and to praise  
It is a comely thing.

The sunlight flashed and changed about them. Fleets of white cloud were speeding across the blue, mingling now, now parting and driving on to the mellow lucid eastern horizon. Meadows wrought with the full gleam of the cowslips shone pale gold. Beneath the white flame that clothed the thornbrake the banks were all blue with speedwell. From the splendor of the hawthorn, from the wide, bare branches of the swaying oak and high in the utter glory of the sunlight rose the music of the great harmony of springtime. All the live warm air rang with joy.

Behind Colonel Stow's back a small voice spake :  
"Sir, are you a soldier?"

"At least I am nothing else," said Colonel Stow, and turned in the saddle to smile at her. I can not find that she was beautiful beyond the ordinary. Colonel Royston has called her a wholesome piece of red and white. But I think he never loved her. She was small, yet of a gracious fullness of form. There was too much of her hair to be neatly ordered, and with the light through it it glistened like gold. Colonel Stow saw a grave honesty in her gray eyes. Purity encompassed her, seemed indeed her very self, yet you would not doubt her in fullness a woman.

"Are you upon the Lord's side?" she said simply.

"I shall know when I die," said Colonel Stow.

"Ah, but now—now is the accepted time!" she cried, and then blushed and was shy. "Pray, sir, what are you? Of what faith?"

"I am a great man in the making," quoth Colonel Stow.

The honest eyes grew in naïve wonder and fear of evil. "In what way great, sir?"

Colonel Stow was ready enough to explain. "Madame, what a man can do, I can do better. What a man fears, I fear not. When a man despairs, I am full of heart. And with a lost cause I conquer."

"Child," says my Lady Lepe, "we have mistook the gentleman, who is surely God."

But the round face against Colonel Stow's shoul-

der was exceeding grave. "Sir, are you with us or against us?" she said severely.

"I am both. I am neither," said Colonel Stow blandly. "And thus secure entertainment."

Joan Normandy gave a little gasp of horror. "Then do you not believe anything?" she cried, shrinking as far as she could in safety from those broad infidel shoulders.

Colonel Stow turned in the saddle smiling. "I believe that I can be great, and I take the part that helps me to greatness. If I choose the King, I will believe desperately in his cause. Now I believe in it as little as you."

"Then—then"—she struggled with this strange, horrible scheme of life—"then what is't you live for? Why do you seek to be great? Have you no faith to guide you at all?"

"Ay, madame, the faith and worship of a most admirable lady," said Colonel Stow, with kindling eye.

"But sure, sir, she would have you not great, but righteous and true," the girl cried.

Colonel Stow looked at her with wise, mirthful eyes. "Is that a woman's way, mistress?" said he.

"Ay, sir, indeed. 'Tis the great, great pride of a woman to help a man to righteousness."

My Lady Lepe surveyed the girl with some contempt. "Some man is to have a melancholy life, I see," quoth she, and the girl blushed painfully.

Colonel Stow laughed. The wars had educated



him. "The best of us dislike redeemers, child," said he, "even in petticoats. You bear too hard on the world. No cause is all of God, none all of the devil. If I fight for this or that with equal heart, I know myself no villain. What matters to the world is that the men who can should rule and school the rest to comfortable life. I am born for that. I grip at place and wide power to have men the happier for me. Men must be mastered, and I can do it—to mine honor, which is the honor of my lady."

"Does she know you talk so?" said the girl in a low voice of awe.

"There is nothing in my thought for which she need feel shame, madame. It was the fashion once for a soldier to wear his lady's riband upon his morion. I bear my lady's colors in my soul, and live by her spirit. She hath been my inspiration since I had body or mind to go my own way. She hath command of every part of me. She is very queen in all her being. She is of a divine beauty, yet 'tis not the beauty of her that I worship. She—"

My Lady Lepe yawned audibly. "Perhaps, sir, this might delight the lady more than us. I hope so."

Colonel Stow flushed like a boy. "Madame, if you knew her, you would despise the weakness of my praise. 'Tis Mistress Lucinda Weston of Stoke." He spoke as who should say "the Queen of Heaven is my love," and with shining dazzled eyes looked right on through the sunlight.

My Lady Lepe was smitten with pallor. "Is the

lady aware of your devotion?" she said, and her voice was strained and strange, so that Colonel Stow turned to her. "I—I have some acquaintance there," she explained swiftly.

"I am her sworn servant since she was a child," said Colonel Stow, "and thrice in ten years of war I have snatched the time to see her, and each time known her more worthy worship. But she is known to you, madame. Is she not more noble far than I tell you?"

"You can scarce expect a woman to say so," said my Lady Lepe sourly.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COLONEL STOW SEES HIS INSPIRATION

COLONEL STOW heard with alarm that my Lady Lepe was bound for Stoke Manor. "Madame," says he in agitation, "you spoke of a lady in sore need. Is Mistress Weston distressed or ill bested?"

"I said she was in need of me," my Lady Lepe snapped.

Colonel Stow bowed and begged the honor of being her escort. My Lady Lepe, who had no means of denying, said with an ill grace something polite.

Bearing away from the hills as the sun sank upon a troubled sea of gold and gray, they came by heavier roads to the dark, blue-green meadows, the brown tilth of the vale. Colonel Stow breathed deep the unforgettable, grateful scents of home. There was blood in his cheeks, and again and again his eye gleamed for a hedge-row, a tree of memories.

All the way Royston and his minister, checking and checking again, dropped slowly back to them. Both were concerned to see what my Lady Lepe would do when they came to the dark files of elms that led off the highway to Stoke Manor. She made

no mystery. She had no suspicions, and was in a hurry. With a bow and a "Good morrow, sir. Good morrow, your reverence," she turned short off.

Colonel Stow halted and swiftly set Joan Normandy down—who was surprised, and stood there looking at him, like a child alarmed by some adult wickedness.

"You know the homestead, George," he cried. "Commend these good folk to my father. I will be with you in an hour," and he was off after my Lady Lepe.

Colonel Royston, having with grace assisted Joan Normandy up behind him, found her father regarding him severely. "Ay, sir," said he with a shake of the head, "your melancholy anticipations have been gratified. I congratulate you on your worst suspicions."

The minister frowned. "Pray, sir, why does your friend company the malignant?"

Colonel Royston was never prodigal of the truth. "Why, sir, consider. He deems the creature a lady, and 'tis but common courtesy to be her escort to the end."

"Is he thus beguiled?" the minister questioned.

"I would never trust the man that can not be deceived," said Royston, who himself, I take it, saw always very clearly.

Colonel Stow and my Lady Lepe, neither, I doubt, much liking the other, made great speed to the Manor; and I wonder if Mistress Lucinda Weston

liked either when they surprised her in her garden in an aged, faded, dark gown. She checked her walk and stood like a queen, cold and proud, gazing at them full.

"'Twas she alone," says my Lord Digby in an intimate letter, "that converted me to an admiration of slight women. She was cleanly, straight as a pine, lithe as a willow sapling, yet with a hundred graces of allure." She was other than beautiful, as I judge. She gave a man challenge by the fullness of her life. Her charm was in strength. She had the wide, fearless eyes of a boy. The warm splendor of her hair, the full lips near scarlet, were vivid of passionate will.

Colonel Stow, whose face was very pale, whose heart at wild work, bowed before her to half his height. My Lady Lepe sped to her and caught her breast to breast and kissed her. The blood was flowing in Colonel Stow's brow at that. But Mistress Weston freed herself from the embrace all composed and fair of cheek. "Good morrow, child," says she. "It is kind in you to come." My Lady Lepe, who was red and something disordered, circled her with an arm again. She permitted, but was more concerned in Colonel Stow, who stood rooted to the ground and dumb. "This is a friend from of old," she said, and he saw that strange, wise smile of hers that ever made his heart check and throb. "It was Major Stow last. What now? Colonel, or Baron



of the Empire, or Knight of the Fleece?" and she held out her hand.

Colonel Stow went upon one knee to kiss it, and she leaned back in my Lady Lepe's arm at ease. "Colonel Stow, madame," says he, "and always your most true and humble servant."

"Tell him how he has served you in bringing you me, Lucinda," quoth my Lady Lepe, and appeared to find the position humorous.

"'Tis you should reward him for that, child," said Lucinda demurely, and made herself more comfort in my Lady Lepe's arm.

My Lady Lepe royally presented Colonel Stow with her hand, who kissed it in turn. "I have been honored by my task, madame," says he.

"I wonder," says my Lady Lepe in soft mirth.

Colonel Stow, who saw nothing mirthful, turned to Lucinda. "But Mistress Weston, madame has told me that you are in need. If I can avail, I am utterly at your command."

"Nay," quoth my Lady Lepe, "Lucinda needs only me," and therewith embraced her closer. "Is't not so, child?" They looked in each other's eyes and laughed. Then my Lady Lepe smiled upon Colonel Stow.

Colonel Stow bowed. "It is well, madame. I will pray leave to wait on you again."

"Sir, you are always pleasing," quoth Lucinda, and Colonel Stow went away mighty well content.

Guarded from the road by a great hedge of yew

and a noble orchard, close the homestead of Broadfields stood. Its red walls and roof were mellowing with lichen, and in the last sunlight it glowed like a house of jewels behind the white glory of the blossoming trees. Across the gate a man of some years was leaning. Hair and small beard had come near white, but his cheeks were like a russet apple, and his eyes wide and clear and bright. He held up his hand to his son, and Colonel Stow swung to the ground, and with arms linked, silent, they walked to the house. Colonel Royston, boots and buff coat laid aside, lounged with a long pipe in the doorway and surveyed them benignly.

"Well, well," said the father, as one who recalls himself from the extravagance of emotion. . . . "And so you have brought a maid home with you at last, Jerry?" and the brown cheeks wrinkled humorously.

"A maid in love with righteousness, so doomed to die a maid. Have you heard her story, sir?"

"Ay. God save all children, for I think all parents be mad. This fellow has not been in enough turmoil to-day, but is off to the army at Aylesbury, and hath left her here to weep by herself a night. A simple, clean maid, too, Jerry," says the artless father.

"Why, sir, simple more than enough—and clean more than enough, too."

"Well, you ever took more pepper to your meat than I. Come in, lad, and we'll to supper before

George Royston here has spoiled his stomach with a pipe. Man is not pig, say I, that he should be better smoked."

"Why, sir, I am much like bacon," said Royston. "The friend of man, but no love of the ladies."

"Proper enough for a married man, but dull life for a bachelor. Well, and what will you have for a whet? Pickled eels, or something of a smoked neat's tongue, or a taste of the new Dutch salad?"

They were in the hall of the homestead, a broad, low room, all dark oak, with candles bright in pewter sconces, and a fragrant pine log red and gray on the hearth. Soon they made a little party at the head of the long table, with serving men and maids heartily busy below the salt. Joan Normandy, on Mr. Stow's right hand, too shy to speak, too shy to see anything but her platter, was plied in vain with many good things, till, when she would taste neither turkey pie nor a porridge of veal and plums, the men despaired and let her be, respecting grief so potent. They were dallying with the apples and cheese and strong ale, and the serving folk all off to bed, and a pipkin of sack-posset hissing comfortably upon the hearth, before Mr. Stow had a mind to speak of what he felt. Royston watched him look at his son, and knew a strange pang of loneliness. "And have you had your fill of war now, Jerry?" says he.

Colonel Stow laughed. "I am back for a bigger meal of it, sir. You have a war here that gives one appetite."

"It gives me the stomach-ache," said his father. "Because a king wants to be God, and Parliament men want to be kings, honest lads that might be raising good wheat and good children go goring one another like mad cattle—pah! Well, well! There was something left out of me that is in you and your brother. I want nothing that I would make men die for."

"David, sir?" cried Colonel Stow. "Is he turned soldier?"

"I'gad, he is turned saint, too, which is more trouble. He hates a bishop as I do the fly on the turnips, and conceives he'll make an end of them, which I do not. He is the major of a sweet company that pray like old women and fight like butchers, with a pragmatistical preaching lawyer Ireton to their colonel. Oons, Jerry, I hope you are no saint, at least. It balks a man with his dinner." Then suddenly the good man remembered the girl at his side. "Nay, my dear, I mean naught against you or your worthy father. 'Tis a parson's trade to be precise and godly, and we like him the better. And a woman is the comelier for standing above a man. You are as sweet as a nosegay at table. But a man likes some ease for himself."

She blushed; she was daintily shy, trying to find words. "Nay, please, oh, please, do not talk of me. But sure, sir, 'tis a man's duty and great joy to live and die for the glory of God."

"Ay, my dear, and I know no better way of it than

to grow good wheat and good children for God's world."

"Ah, but there is faith," the girl cried, her eyes shining. "We are naught without that. The true faith—we must hold it and preach it in word and deed, if by any means we can save people."

"Eh, little maid, little maid, I can never be so sure my neighbor is lost. If he does fairly I'll not quarrel with his faith, or bully him into mine, or kill him to save my soul. Well, well. I am too easy for the times, I think—like cider of a frosty day. If you like strong wine, here is Jerry, who would set all the world by the ears if he could be general of half. What, lad, you would still be great or nothing, eh?"

"The man who is not great is nothing," said Colonel Stow.

"Now, I think something of the little man who can hoe a clean row," said his father. "Eh, well, it is good to have fire in your belly, and good, too, to have burned it out. You will be blazing some while yet, Jerry." He cocked a wise eye at his son. "Still for Mistress Weston?"

"Till the end of time, sir." At the assurance his father was swiftly so melancholy that Colonel Stow was alarmed. "Pray, sir, what ails her?" he cried.

His father faltered. "Why, no ill for herself, but ill for you, lad. She is betrothed to a young gentleman out of Berkshire. One Gilbert Bourne, a captain of the King's. He comes to her dressed in a woman's coats to cheat the Puritan patrolmen. And



Jerry, lad, I doubt not it is he you brought her to-day."

The wound was kindly given in one clean stroke. Colonel Stow leaned back and shaded his eyes with his hand. Then Joan Normandy, though indeed it could be no blame of hers, blushed painfully, and Mr. Stow, looking anywhere but at his son, saw that her brown hands were clenched till the knuckles glistened white. In a moment she rose, made her curtsy and fled away. Colonel Stow did not see, did not hear Royston making swift, facile talk of the spring sowing. He was groping breathless in a world from which the light and air of hope had been torn away. He did not perceive that he had been wronged. That the false my Lady Lepe had dealt with him unhandsomely; that Lucinda had borne part in an ignoble mockery of him—these matters passed him by. The impulse of his life was suddenly dead. He was afraid. . . .

The rhythmic clatter of ordered horsemen broke upon him. He started up pallid. "Who goes?" he cried fiercely. Royston laid a hand on his arm. The sound came nearer and passed, while the two soldiers listened keenly. "A troop. What does it mean?" said Colonel Stow more calmly.

"It means that our parson knew the man under the petticoats," said Colonel Royston. "And my lady will be adorning a Puritan prison without them." The vision gave him plain consolation.

Colonel Stow strode out.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MY LADY LEPE TAKES OFF HER PETTICOATS

MY LADY WESTON had the misfortune to wed a man whom she did not amuse. She was the mother of a daughter with more brains than herself. You would not expect her to find life pleasant. After Sir Godfrey's death she was doubtless more at ease, but she had made the mistake of loving him. Her daughter was not unkind, but plainly had no need of her. My Lady Weston, in fact, had not enough to give for any one to need her. Her private tragedy was that she knew it.

The happiest days of all her life were those in which Gilbert Bourne trusted her with the tale of his first shy hopes of her daughter. It was such a one as Gilbert Bourne, joyous with a thousand frank enthusiasms, for whom in truth her nature was made, and, listening to his shy, eager confidence, she could dream her youth back, and a glad wooing, and happiness sure. But when he grew bolder and Lucinda kind, he wanted no more of her mother. My Lady Weston had again to efface herself. That was her trade.

Lucinda was not troubled by her mother as she sat

in the white room of the Manor by Gilbert Bourne. He wore still his somber petticoats of the road, but she was resplendent. An apple-green gown clung close about her, with embroidery of silver on her bosom, and the full light fell—always she loved light—through her rich hair and came with mellow ray to caress her slender neck and shoulder. Gilbert Bourne adored, and she smiled.

“Heaven! Do you know how you fire a man?” he cried.

Her smile faded a little. He saw a strange defiant gleam in her eyes. “Are you afraid of flame? I have something to give the man who fires my heart.”

He caught her closer. “Lucinda! You! Such a gift as no man ever enjoyed yet. You are the very wild strength of life.”

She laughed softly, looking out at the night. “I would take more than I give,” she said.

“That can not be. All of a man, his soul to fight with yours the world through, to worship you and guard and serve you, oh, I give you all, all. But 'tis nothing for what you give in love—all the fierce full glory and joy. Lucinda!” He crushed her hands in his, his breath was on her cheek.

She turned her head. “Teach me your hunger,” she breathed, her lips close to his.

Then he laughed as if all were won. “Dear, you were made for delight. You shall sound every note of love, and throb to the music. I’ll wake—”

Out of the black void beyond the window a gentleman in buff rose to the light, a swart Puritan trooper. A moment he gazed helpless. The duplication of petticoats in this wooing plainly confused him. Then he grabbed the shoulder of each. "In the name of Adam, which is the man of you?" he roared.

I wonder if Lucinda ever fully forgave her lover that ridiculous moment. She repulsed him in a spasm of passion that sent him into the Puritan's arms and herself out of them. So that a dozen more righteous warriors, breaking into the room, saw their comrade embracing one woman with a violent fervor, while another regarded him in crimson, palpitating horror. Their natural moral emotions held them a moment gaping. "Oh, fools," groaned the first comer, for Gilbert Bourne was hammering doughtily at his face, "this is the man. Ugh! And a man of wrath. Bind him with strong cords." Then they encompassed Gilbert Bourne and overwhelmed him, bidding him earnestly not to kick against the pricks. Doing so with violence, he was borne out.

Then Lucinda, angry with him and the Puritans and herself, and all the scheme of things, cried out: "It is a foul, cowardly outrage!" The one trooper who was left buried his face in a kerchief, not for emotion, but because Gilbert Bourne had set his nose bleeding mightily. "Oh, that I were a man!" she cried, stamping her foot. "I would swinge you for it! But if I were a man you had not dared!"

"Woman, for what I know, you are," said the trooper in a muffled voice. "This is a confusing household to a godly mind."

She cried out in wordless passionate disgust. He strode solemnly to the door, holding his nose. "Where are you going?" she cried. "What is your work? What would you do?"

"Woman," he replied with much dignity, "I would put cold iron to my back." I can be sorry for Lucinda.

For indeed she got no more of those righteous troopers than that. Cornet Jehoiada Tompkins had been sent to capture a man of Belial in petticoats, and, having done it, was in haste to be gone. Gilbert Bourne, much disordered, was straitly bound on his own horse, and they bore him off to Puritan justice at Aylesbury.

It is now well that you should come to the loft where upon fragrant hay Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc were snoring. Matthieu-Marc felt the end of a riding-whip separating his ribs. He rolled over, being ticklish, and saw level with him on the ladder a lantern and the face of Colonel Stow, which last said: "Quiet. Saddle," and vanished.

Matthieu-Marc kicked Alcibiade, who, unawake, kicked feebly back. "Even asleep you are not a Christian," said Matthieu-Marc sadly. "Infidel!" he took Alcibiade by the ear. "Infidel, arise!"

Alcibiade sat up. He yawned cavernously on



Matthieu-Marc. "I shall never be ready for the resurrection," said he.

"I understand your fears of it," said Matthieu-Marc, and, having by this time got his boots on, he vanished down the ladder, whither, groaning but swiftly, Alcibiade followed.

In the stable below, Royston was at Colonel Stow's elbow. "What is the campaign, Jerry?" said he in a low voice.

"If the gentleman be taken, I must set him free," quoth Colonel Stow, busy with his saddle.

Colonel Royston confesses that he did not see the need. To him the issue of the affair appeared humorously just. "Why, Jerry," says he, "it was a scullion's trick the lad played you."

"It belongs to me to save him," said Colonel Stow.

Colonel Royston turned to his own horse. Chivalry, he reflected, is the most dangerous engine against women—a sex ever unchivalrous. If Jerry would outshine this Gilbert Bourne and dazzle his Lucinda, no better way than to play Quixote. Thus Colonel Royston, who did not suspect his friend of a like profundity, and therefore admired him.

Soon they were riding through the stormy dark, Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc bearing each a shoulder-load of trace rope. Colonel Stow might be Quixote at heart, but he had another man's head and ten years' mingled campaigning to help it. Nor to him nor to Royston did the affair loom arduous. They knew themselves in such matters. They rode

to the double rank of elms by the road to the Manor, halted a while to listen, and went on some way. Then at a word Matthieu-Marc slipped to the ground and wove a thick tangle of rope across the road from tree to tree. He came back and mounted again, and held the horse of Alcibiade, who went afoot, crouching. So they waited there in the blackness while the trees rustled and groaned. It was not long till the troop of Cornet Tompkins came crashing on. Cornet Tompkins was in a hurry, and thereby his first files met the graver destruction. Their horses, crashing down in the strong network, plunged madly, and upon them came comrade after comrade, till half the troop was lost in blind, roaring chaos. Swiftly the while behind them Alcibiade wove new ropes across the way and fled, so that when the rearward men tried to rein back, their horses in turn were overthrown, and there was a double distracting tumult. In the stormy dark none could help himself or another, nor see nor guess how they were beset. Blindly they raved, and Colonel Stow and his friend, calm engineers of terror and disaster, hovered on the verge, marking down my Lady Lepe. Out of the thud and crash of the struggling horses and the yells and shoutings of angry, hurt, frightened men, Cornet Jehoiada Tompkins was heard exhorting scripturally, his desire being chiefly to hew Agag in pieces.

But Agag they caught none, for Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc, unseen, unfollowed, were already

neatly away, and Royston and Colonel Stow, plunging purposeful into the midst, had broken through, with my Lady Lepe and her horse a sandwich between them, before any one knew them for foes. Some bright mind marked the prisoner going in the gloom and raised a yell, some plunged after, but thereupon from all round the compass came a crackle of pistol shots. Colonel Royston, with some small aid, could ever be ubiquitous. It sufficed. The Puritans had no mind to scatter in a circle of foes.

Well on the road to Little Kimble, Colonel Stow drew his rein and my Lady Lepe's. "You will doubtless go faster without your petticoats, sir," said he, and began to cut her bonds.

"Zounds, do you tell me you know what I am?" cried Gilbert Bourne.

"I have the honor to wish you joy of your manhood, sir," said Colonel Stow gravely. Gilbert Bourne muttered some oath. Once free, he tore off his skirts and settled himself astride. "That is the road to Thame, where you should be safe," said Colonel Stow.

"I will swear I am not such a cur as I seem," Gilbert Bourne cried. "I'gad, sir, I ask your pardon."

Colonel Stow bowed. "There is no question of pardon, sir. I give you good night."

Colonel Royston is moved to record that he was sorry for Mr. Bourne.

Fetching a compass toward Aylesbury, they came comfortably home again, but were scarce in before

there was a rumble of horsemen. Royston put out the lights, Colonel Stow shot the bolts, and they went lightly to bed. So that when three minutes after there was a monstrous din at the door, the whole house was patently asleep.

It was some while, and the noise growing ferocious, before a light was struck in an upper room, and the night-capped head of Colonel Royston was thrust into the night. He yawned at it capaciously while the Puritan troopers bellowed up to him. "An ungodly lascivious noise," said he. "I think you be malignants."

It was made known to him that they were poor servants of the Lord of Hosts who desired to know if he had any word of a movement of malignants there or thereby.

Colonel Royston gave them in definite terms a description of the character and a prophecy of the fate of those who troubled the sleep of the godly with vain questionings.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A PERSON OF IMPORTANCE

COLONEL ROYSTON, walking a while before his breakfast, beheld with a bland satisfaction the approach of the minister. The minister was something wan. Colonel Royston joyfully escorted him within. There Mr. Stow met him with a large smile and the hope that he had not come to take his daughter from them so soon. "Sir," quoth the minister, "I have no home to give her, for I lie in the camp, and in truth she hath not where to lay her head. If of your good will she may shelter here a while, myself being at all her charges, I would give you much thanks."

"If 'tis your will, child," Mr. Stow turned to the girl, "'tis heartily mine." She feared with a blush she would trouble him. "No more than the apple-blossom the tree. So that is well."

"I am hungry to hear, sir," says the innocent Colonel Royston, as they went to table, "how you caught your runagate malignant in petticoats."

The minister gathered solemnity. "Sir, I have seen the handiwork of the powers of darkness before my eyes. I have beheld the miracles of that old ser-



pent. Do not doubt, sir, that in this dispensation the devil is with power to save his own."

"You explain to me the survival of many of my friends," said Colonel Royston. "Pray, sir, did the man become woman to spite you?"

"The creature was man enough, sir, and fought like a beast in petticoats—"

"I have ever held that beasts should be confined to breeches," Royston murmured.

"But he was overcome, though certain godly young men of the troop still bear marks of his malignity. He was bound upon his horse, and we set off at speed for Aylesbury. Behold, we had not drawn clear of the park when our horses were caught as in a net—both rearward and vanward at once, mark you, which is certainly witchcraft—and some charged down upon us and snatched the prisoner away, and when we would have pursued, lo, there was a ring of fire all round us, as if a great army. Then Cornet Tompkins, who is indeed a savory member, bade halt and sing a psalm. The which done (being Koph of the one hundred and nineteenth, a very sweet portion), all that army of Satan was passed away, and we were enabled of grace to cut loose the net of many cords wherein we were enmeshed. Then some would have it that we had been assaulted by a regiment of malignants, and Cornet Tompkins bade us move forward together, lest we should be beset, and we went seeking tidings from house to house; yea, sir, and I grieve that we did

break your comfortable rest, wherefore you did justly rebuke us in godly fashion. For it was even as I told Cornet Tompkins, of malignants we could gather tidings nowhere, and it is plain we were entrapped of no mortal power, but of that great red dragon which hath seven heads and ten horns, the tail whereof draws the stars of heaven and casts them upon earth, even as he did put us to confusion with cords till we cried upon the name of the Lord, which is a very present refuge."

Mr. Stow, in mute practical admiration of such a sentence, passed him a full tankard of beer. Colonel Royston carved into a boar's head with relish. "Sir," says he, "your exposition is gladsome. Never before have I seen the devil in things so clearly," and he smiled upon Colonel Stow.

"It should be a source of pride, sir," says Colonel Stow, busy with smoked venison, "that the devil is thus attentive to you." And Royston saw Joan Normandy look at him with horror.

"Sir, lead me not into the pit of vainglory," said the minister. "I will avow my heart is glad Sathanas hath chosen me to march against with powers. Yet of a truth there are those much more worthy of him."

"Nay, sir, 'tis ill modesty to bid another go to the devil in your stead," quoth Colonel Stow. "We must needs deem you worthiest if he does." The minister shook his modest head, but Joan Normandy gave Colonel Stow eyes of more and more ill will. Colonel

Royston complains of her somewhere that she had wits in her as well as virtue—an unnatural wedlock.

Colonel Stow surprised himself that morning by an insufficiency of melancholy. He knew, whenever he dared let himself think, that the loss of Lucinda tore from him the spirit of life. Without a hope of her he had no will to go on. But his heart would not believe him defeated. Behind all thought there surged in him a blind conviction that she was his of right. More surely real than all that reason could give him he felt inviolable bonds. There was that in the past no man could make of none effect, no woman betray. He had the strength of dreams. In his first manhood, when he lay upon the bosom of the downs and the earth spoke to him of the power of life, he had seen Lucinda the soul of his soul in a timeless world of eager deeds. On the stark, desolate fields of Germany, when the squadrons clashed and he rode to victory through a wild whirl of war, he had seen his strength bound ever to her service, that in union they might conquer and guide the troubled course of things. The dream had been granted. He was sure.

He could not be very unhappy as he walked in the orchard fragrance. And indeed it was no day of misery. A swift shower had just gone whirling by, but already, breaking through a smoky cloud rift, the sun was clear again, and the wet white blossoms sparkled with rainbow light, and the daffodils beneath were laden with a gleaming dew of gold. On

the wet air came the wild, glad spirit of spring. Colonel Stow breathed of it till his mind was whirled away in delight. He was drunk with the goodness of things.

In which happy state he beheld Joan Normandy walking by the violet bank, a vision of neat womanhood. Colonel Stow felt fatherly and approached her smiling in that style. She turned her back on him. "I might rashly believe that I have displeased you," Colonel Stow mildly conjectured, and turning, unashamed, walked by her side.

She flushed. She became fierce. "I beg you would not company with me, sir," she cried.

"That gives me the right to ask why," said Colonel Stow placidly.

She turned to face him. The grave gray eyes flamed. "You have made a mock of my father."

"Oh," Colonel Stow understood. She had seen that expedition of darkness. "You should have a conscience that will let you sleep o' nights, child. But consider: it would be vanity in me to claim that I am the devil." She flung away from him and sped on over the turf walk. He followed. "Moreover, your father would grieve if he thought Sathanas was neglecting him. Your anger is unreasonable." She was caught in an angle of the hedge, and could not escape, but she kept her face hidden, and he saw her hand at her eyes. "Why, child," says he, with his hand on her shoulder, "'tis an idle jest enough, but you make too much of it. Your father has taken

no hurt, nor his cause. Nay, believe me. 'Tis only a lad in love I have snatched from prison, and your father is no worse for it. Why make it so grave a matter?"

"You have—you have made me act in a lie," she sobbed.

This precision of righteousness was something beyond Colonel Stow. He took his hand from her. "Pray, if it would ease your conscience, tell him the truth."

She turned on him again, miserable and much wrath. "You know I can not, and—and I hate you!"

Colonel Stow caressed his beard. "You are out of my knowledge, child," he confessed. "If I can make your way easier, show me."

"I am a spy on you if I tell. And you saved us. Oh," she made a gesture of impatient childish wrath, "I can not tell why you should meddle to help him. He had betrayed you with her. What are they to you?"

Colonel Stow became erect. "You talk of what you know nothing, child," he said stiffly.

But she would not be rebuked, and they stood against each other in angry dignity. Until—since all dignity in this world is fated to a mirthful end—until a hen, fleeing with hysterical complaints, hurtled through Colonel Stow's legs and vanished through the hedge. She was pursued by a small, round, determined child, who, finding these two



large people, checked and stood before them stolid, a person conscious of importance. Solemnly he looked from one to the other, then, his blue eyes large and accusing, he turned to Colonel Stow. "You have made that lady cry," he said gravely.

Joan Normandy gave a queer, nervous laugh.

It displeased the child, who thought her disrespectful to him. He devoted himself to Colonel Stow. "Man," says he, with the easy dignity of an equal, "who are you?" Colonel Stow gravely accounted for himself. "I," said the child, "am Antony Jeremiah Higgs. What is you doing?"

"Sir, I am being scolded," said Colonel Stow sadly.

Antony Jeremiah Higgs turned the eye of a cold critic upon Joan Normandy, who indeed, between anger and unhappiness, was not comely. He reverted to Colonel Stow. "Does you know Martha?" Colonel Stow denied it. "Martha is like that when she is cross with Sam."

"Antony Jeremiah Higgs," said Colonel Stow, "a man does not chatter about ladies."

The child was plainly disappointed, having doubtless intended a further parallel with Martha. But he took the hint gentlemanly, and changed the subject with vigor. "Man," says he, "can you make men?"

"I am not allowed to," said Colonel Stow.

"Why?"

"Because I should not do it well enough."

"Try," said the child imperiously, and turned upon Joan. "Can't you make men?"

"Not very well," says she, and then, with impatience at the foolish stupefaction of Colonel Stow: "He means out of wood, of course."

"Oh! Faith, that is an easier task," said Colonel Stow, and pulled down a sturdy twig of walnut, sliced it off, and began to whittle it into mannikins. Antony Jeremiah Higgs directed masterfully the details of the creation. The Adam of it did not please him, and he generously handed the creature to Joan. "You may have that. I like them with legs."

"Legs are but vanity, a means to naughtiness," said Colonel Stow, but began to construct them, while the child clung to him in anxious delight.

"Now make them some women."

"Faith," says Colonel Stow, "I think they will be more at peace without them."

"They must have mothers," said the child.

"They should have thought of that before they were born."

Antony Jeremiah Higgs had too serious a mind to dally with flippant ingenuity. "Go on," he ordered with some scorn, and Colonel Stow meekly continued the creation.

Joan Normandy stood by them, still, unconstrained now. She watched the small boy clinging about Colonel Stow, eager, happy, and Colonel Stow giving himself gaily to meet the manifold needs of

childish importance, and the trouble was smoothed away from her face.

Blue clouds had clashed on the hill above Wendover, and a whirl of rain came by. But the sun was clear still, and soon a rainbow spanned the vale. "What is it?" said Antony Jeremiah Higgs, and was told. He gazed with round, approving eyes at the splendor. "I want it," said he.

"Are you sure you can find it?" said Colonel Stow.

There was the child's look of wonder at man's folly. "Of course I can find it. Come wiv me."

So, with a child for guide, Colonel Stow went off to find a rainbow. Joan Normandy, left behind, looked at the round scrap of life poised to the swing of the man's shoulder, and smiled like the spring-time, through tears.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### COLONEL STOW IS AGAIN INSPIRED

IN the farm-yard Alcibiade, who had a mind interested in all things, examined the domestic habits of the Berkshire pig. His investigations were interrupted by the issue of Matthieu-Marc from the kitchen. Matthieu-Marc came like a shooting star, with flying dishwater for his tail. From the doorway a plump and rubicund cook spoke of his character in the style of the recording angel, and threatened shrilly of the wrath to come.

Alcibiade shook his head at the offender. "You always make love with too much salt in it. It is also the fault of your soups. And disagreeable to persons of innocent mind."

"I do not desire to please children," said Matthieu-Marc, wrathful still. "And it is not a matter of love, but of sauce."

"It is the same thing," said Alcibiade, "to persons of delicacy."

"I wished to make a sauce of garlic and olives to serve with the roast beef—a sauce alluring and subtle. She resented it. She is a person of no soul. Come away."

They went, and, Matthieu-Marc being in the power of his emotions, went with speed till they came to a hurdled meadow, where the shepherds were busy among many lambs. Of them Alcibiade, who was not fond of going upon his own legs, made an excuse to stop. But Matthieu-Marc was impatient. "They tire me, your sheep. Bah, it is a country all sheep, I think, with no taste for savories and no divine desire of war. M. le Colonel also, I do not understand him any more. He dallies. He is in two minds—like the soup of these English, which does not know whether it would be water or grease."

"In fact, my dear Matthieu, you have no intellect. You do not understand anything but the one little belly of your own. M. le Colonel, he is like the late Bayard and myself; he fights to fulfil his own glorious nature. He is a soldier of dreams. That is why he and I are very terrible in war. We desire only to give our great souls full play."

"In that case, my friend, you should become a sheep," growled Matthieu-Marc.

Alcibiade contemplated the bleating lambs with benignity. "My dear Matthieu," says he, "most men, being stupid like yourself, desire to make life more savory than is good for them. By example, as you want foods that make the innocent stomach wrath, so you lust after plunder in war. But your soldier of dreams seeks only to be himself and let his greatness shine before men."

"I can behold a sheep thinking himself great,"



murmured Matthieu-Marc. "He would be amusing."

"It is something, after all, to be the perfect sheep," said Alcibiade.

And meanwhile the soldier of dreams was away to his desire. He had permitted himself some splendor. A feather of peaceful green caressed his hat, and the rest of him was a consonant blue. I find something of his nature in this affection for blue and green. There was lace from Bruges at his throat, caught in a brooch of sapphires. For all this, Lucinda, I fear, liked him the better. Moreover, he was plainly a man, and therefore a relief from the epicene wooing of my Lady Lepe. And Lucinda, too, perhaps, had dwelt with dreams. When she first waked to know her womanhood he had been in her heart. That availed always.

It is likely she was hoping for him when she came out beyond the hedge of roses to the park. So you might explain the sweet humility of her gown, all simple and silver gray. She met him with a shy curtsy and downcast eyes. "I had no right to hope for this, sir."

"You have ever the right to command me, madame."

"It becomes me better to ask your pardon." She raised her eyes to his.

"Madame?"

"To play before you in so ill a jest."

"I would give my life to know how much was jest, madame."

Her neck grew rosy (that was a great beauty of hers). "What must you think me?" she cried. "Tell me, tell me how much you know."

"Of this, madame, I can know nothing but what your own lips tell."

"You know it was a man?" she said in a low voice. Colonel Stow bowed. "And yet you, surely none but you, set him free?" He bowed again. "Why, then, why?"

"Since he was at least a friend of yours," said Colonel Stow.

"And if he were more?"

Colonel Stow drew in his breath. "Then—I am the more glad that I helped him," he said slowly.

"I think you live to make me ashamed," she said, and somehow looked at him silent, her clear eyes intent and unafraid, but strangely gentle. "And if I tell you he is no more to me than another man, what shall I seem—whom you saw in his arms?"

"I am more sure of your honor than my own," said Colonel Stow.

"Yes!" She flung her arms wide and laughed glad to the sky. "Yes, you ring true. I should wish you to know all, if you will. This Mr. Bourne, why, I profess I like him not ill, but he is more boy than man. He is pleased to believe himself devoted to me, and hath ventured himself from Oxford often in this disguise. Oh, I doubt I have been foolishly

kind, but indeed he amused me, and did himself no ill, I think. 'Tis just a joyous, honest lad. But indeed he has a bold mischief in him, and—why, I can not tell now whether to laugh or be angry—he made his advantage of your presence to—to”—she was in a pretty confusion—“in fine, sir, 'twas yourself won him what he had. I dared not deny the rogue, lest you should suspect him no woman. And I could not betray him to you, for I feared you committed to the Puritans, like your brother. So he had his impudent will.” She smiled, shy-eyed, and blushing in a delectable way. “Oh, I ought to feel it more hurt—but—but he—well, some day another woman will make him know it is not play.”

“A man might make him know it was an insolence,” said Colonel Stow with some relish.

“Why, yes, sir, when I give some man the right.” And Colonel Stow bowed to the rebuke. “But have you heard enough of me to tell me something of yourself?”

“I think you know the best of me,” said Colonel Stow in a low voice.

“Indeed, I know no terrible ill,” she smiled.

“The best of me is that I love you.” He took her hand and she turned a little away. “That is the strength of my life.” She did not answer, but she did not grudge him her hand.

So they stood when a shadow fell between them. “With whom do you company by stealth, woman?” said one, mouthing in the manner of the pulpit.

Colonel Stow turned, stiffening to behold Cornet Jehoiada Tompkins. Cornet Tompkins was large and upon the way to fatness. His face had reached it, and in some parts betrayed a kindness for the good things of this world. He had the swelling port, the mobile lips of the man of speech. Colonel Stow surveyed him with an amused contempt that stung. He moistened his lips and rolled his eyes. "Who art thou in the purple and fine linen of the Canaanites?" he cried.

"Concerning purple," said Colonel Stow, "though I think it be the bully among colors, it has the patronage of your nose."

"Fellow, we are not met to debate the fashion of my countenance," cried Cornet Tompkins.

"Indeed, sir, it calls not for debate, but lamentations," Colonel Stow admitted.

"I see well that thou art of the blood of Shimei which cursed David. Thy name, oh thou man of Belial, and thy purpose here?"

"My name, sir, is Stow, and my purpose is to glorify your nose. Believe me, sir, 'tis a sweet member."

Cornet Tompkins was plainly embarrassed. "Are you of one blood with that godly Master David Stow which is major in Colonel Ireton's regiment?"

"His unworthy brother am I. And could wish him here, that we might make a duetto concerning your nose, its complexion. Yet will I do what I can to hymn it worthily alone."

Cornet Tompkins, feeling his nose nervously, became plaintive. "Sir, it ill beseems you to mock at a man of God before a Canaanitish woman."

"Mock? Who, I? Sir, I am all lamentation. I could mourn with you all the day long. Like a Dutch tulip at dawn—" Cornet Tompkins did not wait for the elaboration of that poetic simile. He strutted off, wrapped in embarrassed indignation.

With a whimsical smile Colonel Stow turned to Lucinda again. "Life is like that, I think. A creature with such a nose shadows us when we dream. Pray, madame, what is his affair here?"

"He hath quartered himself upon us," said Lucinda angrily. "Oh, sir, 'tis not to be borne. A boor that forces himself into my mother's withdrawing-room to whine his sermons."

Colonel Stow took counsel with his beard. "It were easy to fix a quarrel on him whereof he would not recover. But I doubt you would but have more of his kind to trouble you. Nevertheless, I am heartily at your command if you desire it."

"Nay, that is no help, sir. The fellow swears we are to have a company of his knaves billeted on us till the war ends—because, forsooth, we have given shelter to spies of the King. Indeed, sir, I have much to thank Mr. Bourne for. These vile Roundheads make my life hideous. They force their brutish persons upon me in every chamber. They deafen me whining their psalms. They pray at me with vile names. Oh, I would that the King might



conquer speedily, and whip the knaves back to their kennels."

Colonel Stow's brow was bent, and his eyes fiery, but he spoke calmly enough. "You are all for the King, madame?"

"Who is not but such base rogues as these?" she cried. "Oh, I would that I were a man to strike for him. Sure, sir, every noble heart is with him. 'Tis the honor of England for which he fights. How should he yield his realm to the madness of base-born fanatics? His cause is the cause of every man of right knightly blood. Shall such rogues as these be our masters? Nay, sir, who is loyal to himself is loyal to the King. Each man that hath any honor, ay, each woman, is bound to him." She was fair enough, with her eyes aflame and bosom surging.

Colonel Stow bowed. "You have spoken, madame." She smiled at him, with a new light in her eyes and quick, eager, flung out her hand to him. His lips stayed upon it long, and as she smiled down at him a strange tenderness made her face lovely. Colonel Stow was something pale as he stood again erect, and a long while their eyes spoke together. Then, with her bosom rising, her neck rosy, she turned a little away.

But when, in a while, Colonel Stow spoke again, he was calm enough. "It is plain, madame, that, while you can not drive these rogues away, you can leave them behind. Are there friends where you can make your home a while?"

She hesitated a while, finger on cheek, then with a sudden glad cry: "Ah, but Oxford! To the King at Oxford! One could live there." Then her face fell again. "But these knaves would not suffer it. We are in prison to them."

Colonel Stow smiled. "I can not permit a gentleman of such a nose to meddle with my emotions," said he.

"But"—she looked doubt and surprise, and was plainly puzzled—"but he has many, so many men," she faltered. "It is like a regiment."

"It is in fact half a troop," said Colonel Stow, who had a neat mind. He smiled again. "They make the affair an entertainment."

"You mean that you can?" she cried, and he bowed. "Everything is easy with you," she said slowly. She drew a long breath. Her eyes began to flame. "Oh, it is good, it is good to be by your side. You are sure. You give me life."

He flushed. He caught her hands in a grip that hurt her, and her breast beat against his. And, as a strange, keen throb of passion waked in him, he saw Cornet Tompkins under the elms regarding them gloomily.

It was necessary to part with laughter.

Then Colonel Stow, approaching Cornet Tompkins with determination, described in fullness his nose. It obtruded, nevertheless, persistent into the dreams of life.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### UPON THE USE OF A NOSE

COLONEL ROYSTON complained of the nature of things. The fork of a pear tree made him a pleasant seat, and at whiles its blossom fell upon him, so that he had an Arcadian air. The smoke of his pipe rose comfortably to the lucid sky. Yet he complained. He desired fruit as well as flower. "For," says he, "the virginity of this white blossom purifies the mind so that I am in the mood to eat fruit with a devout relish. But when the fruit is here, my mind, unadorned with flowers, is but gross and carnal, which is proper enough for blood puddings (Jerry, my love, the black puddings of Erbach!), but spoils the taste of fruit. Ah, would that I had been consulted in the creation!"

"As I see it," said Colonel Stow, who was stretched full length beneath him, "the flaw in the world is the nose of Jehoiada. Since Nuremberg, when we made them of our breeches, I have ever doubted a sausage. Sure, the man who uses one for a nose is a misanthrope. Nay, George, the nose of Jehoiada must determine us."

"For myself, if I were not beautiful, I would

choose to be a gargoyle," said Royston. "But you were born shy, Jerry. What ails you with Jehoiada? Does he wear his nose haughtily?"

"With a crude pride. He flaunts it in the delicate places of my soul. Oh, 'tis the ugliness of all the world incarnate. It is plain, George, since the nose of Jehoiada is of one side (certainly God forbid it should be upon two. That would be unfair. There is but one hell), we must be of the other."

Colonel Royston regarded his friend with a singular benignity. "We are to ride for the King, Jerry? Then I think there is another nose than Jehoiada's that is guiding us—to wit, the fair nose of Mistress Lucinda."

"When, by the grace of God, you learn to love a woman—"

"We shall both regret it," said Colonel Royston with decision.

"—her nose will be to you a thing of no account—"

"That will add piquancy to the amour."

"'Tis no part, but the divine whole of her will inspire you. So it is now with me, I will not deny it. Indeed, I am engaged to liberate her from the nose of Jehoiada and bring her to Oxford to the King. Wherefore, George, propound me a strategy. Jehoiada guards the Manor with his nose and half a troop. We muster but four, for I would not bring my father's hinds into the affair—who are indeed but bumpkins."

Colonel Royston waved away smoke. "So my lady would go to the King," said he, drily enough. "Perhaps she would also go to Mr. Bourne?"

"Mr. Bourne is only an impudent boy who is pleased to believe himself enamored," said Colonel Stow. "He is not very amusing, but no more harm."

Colonel Royston looked down at his friend with a singular affection. "All is well, Jerry?" he said softly.

"Very well. . . . I see good days, George. We will make ourselves somewhat to this King of ours. . . . And to fight before the eyes of my lady." . . . He laughed. . . . "Well, the first pleasure is to discomfort Jehoiada. A strategy, George! Propound me a strategy. With four to defeat half a troop. 'Tis worthy of your genius."

Colonel Royston withdrew his pipe and caressed his moustachio. "You remember how Strozzi got the little Margravine away from the Croats at Pfüllingen? Put poppy juice in their beer and cut their snoring throats. But she had a strong stomach, the little Margravine, and your lady might think it over sanguinary."

"Strozzi is a butcher," said Colonel Stow shortly.

"He does make a mess," Royston admitted. "But he arrives. You want a strategy of delicacy, a campaign for petticoats. It is not in my way. I am not sure that it is decent."

Colonel Stow began picking daisies. "If there were firing," said he, "much firing, at dusk or dawn



(Alcibiade could make a very thunder with two carbines), Jehoiada should take the most of his men out against it, and we might swoop upon the Manor and be gone."

Royston shook his head. "If I am too sanguinary, you are too sanguine, Jerry," said he; "and, i'gad, that sums up our natures fairly. I know no surety Jehoiada will be a fool the way you need. When he hears firing he is as like to shut himself in the Manor and stand to arms. Well, we be a pair of paladins, indeed, but miracles are out of fashion."

Colonel Stow cast daisies into the air and gravely watched them fall.

Above the hedge rose the head and shoulders of a man who rode down the lane, a Puritan officer. Colonel Stow sat up. "My brother!" said he, with a whistle of doleful mirth. "He complicates the affair."

In a minute Major David Stow strode into the orchard. He wore a light corselet and helmet of polished steel, and his sleeves and breeches were tawny red. There was no doubt of the brotherhood. They were a match in strength, of the same wholesome pallor, the same earnest, glad eye. But David Stow's faith kept him clean shaven and his hair cropped. And there was brotherhood enough in the greeting. . . . Colonel Royston saluted with a lifted pipe and an approving smile from the tree. I think he had always an admiration for David Stow.

The brothers were side by side on the grass. "It

is good to have you home, Jerry. And you are come in a good hour. This poor land needs such as you." David looked at him with affection, but there was no answer. Colonel Stow was playing with a daisy. "You'll not put off your corselet yet, Jerry?" David cried in some surprise.

"Nay, lad, I wear it. But for which cause?"

"It is not you who can fight for tyranny—a tyranny that would own body and soul." For the first time Colonel Stow heard the faith that fired the strongest hearts of his day—that a man must be free to worship his God what way he would without the leave of bishop or King; that free men could only live in a realm themselves ruled; that the King must be servant of his people, not master. David Stow preached it with a passion that made his brother wonder, and with a strange power. Here was a shy country lad become a man sure of himself and masterful. Colonel Stow knew strength and honored it.

And yet, though he had been free to believe, though no woman had bound him to another cause, I doubt the Puritan faith had never held him. He knew men over well. He saw that the world had no heart for the stern virtue of the Puritan. For each to do what seemed good to himself must needs be chaos. He felt, as a man is sure with no need of reason, that the mass of men were not ready to be free. In a masterless realm he saw cruelty and the ruin of waste. He had no hope of a nation of saints, it may be, no desire. He believed in order and the

middle path passionately, sternly, as fanatics their own wild faith. And the fervor of his brother left him cold.

Still David Stow went on with swelling heart proclaiming the kingdom of God on earth. "Nay, Jerry, you must be with us," he cried at last; "there is but one cause for such as you."

"'Tis a fair dream, lad," said Colonel Stow, looking up from his ruined daisy with something of a sad smile, "but a dream not of our day."

"Nay, this is the hour! 'Tis we are called to the work! Let us be glad that to us is the glory to found surely a nation of righteousness. We must to arms and set all men free from the bonds of the tyrant of sin."

Colonel Stow shook his head. "My world is not your world, lad. I see men that would break down a good order given us from of old. I see a people, no saints, but kindly fools, that need the old rule to guide them aright. David, lad, the hour has not struck for your design. And I—well, I am not a man of to-morrow."

But again David Stow must proclaim his vision, that strange, glad vision of a world not come yet, where each man shall be free to do his own will, and each earnest with an austere passion to do the will of God. To the men of his faith and his day it was near, it was all but real. Colonel Stow shook his head. He saw too clearly to believe. David pleaded passionately still. It was hard for him to deem a

man honest who stood against his cause. But he was sure of his brother, and needed him, I think, as man not often needs man. And at last: "You must be of us, Jerry!" he cried. "The cause calls for such as you. And I—I want you by my side."

It was strongest of all he had said. Colonel Stow drew in his breath. "I am pledged to another cause, lad," he said slowly.

His brother looked in his eyes and knew there was no answer. Silent he held out his hand, silent he rose. Then, turning away, he saw Colonel Royston grave beyond his custom. Their eyes met. In the hardest days that came there was always something of a kindness between these two. "I must not ask you?" said David Stow. Royston shook his head. David Stow looked at his brother again, and went away sorrowful.

They were not wholly light of heart whom he left behind. "I would as soon be that man as myself," said Colonel Royston pensively.

If Colonel Stow could not feel that—for to him was granted the excellence of Lucinda—it was yet some while before he brought his thoughts back to the problem of the hour. "There remains," said he, "the obstacle of Jehoiada. I hope my brother is not a friend of his."

"If he is, we had best go borrow an army," said Colonel Royston grimly.

But that fear was removed, for they saw David Stow pass the orchard hedge again, riding back to

Aylesbury. He waved his hand, and was gone many a day from his brother's life.

Colonel Stow gave a sigh of relief. "He could not, indeed, be the comrade of such a nose. . . . That nose! George, it gives me an idea."

"An idea of low birth."

"'Tis a suspicious member, the nose. And such a nose! I will be sworn Jehoiada is suspicious. It would be but kindness to give that nose employ. Well, he shall suspect. *Gerechter Herrgott!* How he shall suspect!"

Colonel Royston coughed—coughed so piteously that his friend looked up in sympathy. Six feet away in the garden he beheld Joan Normandy plucking daffodils. "How sweetly innocent are flowers," said Colonel Royston, recovering from his illness.

Colonel Stow shook his head. "I discover in you a likeness to Jehoiada, George," he said sorrowfully. Joan Normandy, with a certain defiant deliberation, completed her nosegay. She then departed leisurely.

"I would trust anything," said Colonel Royston, "but righteousness."



## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCERNING THE ANGEL URIEL

“JEHOIADA TOMPKINS, Cornet, will be moved of the spirit at half after ten in the Sabbath forenoon in the palace of the Amalekites, which is called Stoke Manor.” Such was the grateful news conveyed to the homestead in Jehoiada’s own hand. It begat some unseemly mirth from Colonel Royston and an offer of his part to conduct Mistress Normandy to Jehoiada’s punctual motions. “Sir,” says she, with her chin in the air, “I desire your escort nowhere.” For if Colonel Royston loved her little, she was ever something less than Christian to him.

Colonel Stow held the gate for her as she went forth, all black and white, clasping close in her hand a worn Bible, and he stayed a while looking after. Her loneliness appealed to him, and that faith of the worn Bible, yet there was something ridiculous in one who could seek the ministrations of Jehoiada. Between sympathy and mirth he watched her out of sight. Whereby he had the honor of a salute from a strange gentleman, a gentleman who progressed in bounds, like a fluttering hen, a shaggy gentleman who was naked to the waist. He halted on the sight

of Colonel Stow; he flung out a talon of a hand. "Woe unto thee!" he shrieked. "Woe unto thee! I am the Angel Uriel!"

"How do you like it?" said Colonel Stow politely.

"I do not like thee, thou man of Babylon. I pour out my vial upon thee, for thou hast the mark of the beast. I am come to prophesy thy destruction. I am the Angel Uriel, and the noise of my roaring goeth before me. For I am charged to make the high places tremble and the mighty men flee away. Woe unto thee! Thou shalt have a grievous sore."

Then Colonel Stow was gripped by an idea. "This gentleman," said he to himself, "is the very man for Jehoiada." But aloud: "Uriel, my friend, you have mistook my direction. I shall have no sore. I am a person of no honor. But there is one Jehoiada Tompkins that pretends he is moved by the spirit—a very froward preacher that hath the mark of the beast upon his nose."

"Give me word!" cried the barebacked gentleman. "Is he of them that would testify unto the people?"

"Very painfully he does so," said Colonel Stow.

"It is against such I am sent, that they may gnaw their tongues in shame. Verily, I shall prophesy unto him even as the bite of a scorpion. Give me word of him." Colonel Stow gave a precise direction. Straightway he went bounding the road, crying: "Woe, woe, and a lake of fire!"

Then Colonel Stow went in and made Royston

write him a letter, the which he put in his coat, and himself with some expedition followed the bare-backed gentleman.

For my part, I judge Jehoiada Tompkins an honest man who strove earnestly to do his duty. It is not easy to like him the better. Lucinda, walking with her mother along the gallery of Stoke Manor, was surprised by the irruption of half his troop.

"What is this new insolence?" she cried.

"Cornet Tompkins would give his testimony. Desire that you may have ears to hear," quoth a lank corporal.

While the two women looked at each other in helpless disgust, others came flocking to the gallery—such of the peasants as were stern Puritans, such as had the gift of curiosity, all in their whitest smocks and finest woolsey, and the sergeants of the troop ushered them into an orderly array, while the troopers marshalled themselves in line of spiritual battle behind. Joan Normandy came, guided by a solemn giant in steel and buff, but her eyes went this way and that in a fashion less than devout. She was hoping to see Lucinda. There could be no doubt who it was in the silver dress with the proud lips. Joan flushed strangely and hurried by.

It was a great company. The peasant folk came eagerly to spread themselves in the Manor hall. They felt the carved wainscot, the pictures, the gilt armor almost their own. Each one of them swelled as good as the gentry. Truly, the rule of the saints

was pleasant. But Cornet Tompkins was by no means minded to comfort them. With a large Bible and the swelling port of the preacher, he came. His breastplate gleamed like a mirror, the linen at his throat was spotless white, his face glowed and shone. He ascended a chair, glowered, and smacked his lips at the congregation.

"Unto me, Jehoiada, the Lord's cornet, came a voice saying, 'Speak!' Then I knew it was an hour of wrath, and I cried aloud to you, 'Come unto me, that I may chasten you.' Verily, I will spare you no whit. I will scourge you with my tongue for your offenses, which are noisome unto me."

And without doubt Cornet Tompkins had held the attention which he had thus worthily won, but on a sudden a shriek rang through the gallery. "Woe! Woe and a beast of horns!" Through one of the long windows came a shaggy head and a naked body that brandished haggard arms. "Come out! And again I say, come out! I am the Angel Uriel." With one eager impulse the whole congregation turned to him. "Behold the scarlet-colored beast!" he cried, pointing to the ruddy face of Cornet Tompkins. "I see him with seven heads and ten horns. I denounce him unto you. I publish his doom. I am the Angel Uriel. Come out from him, come out; for his name shall be called Magor Missabib."

Cornet Tompkins was displeased. "Who is this that blasphemeth the Word?" said he with austere dignity. "Troop sergeant, away with him!"

"I am the Angel Uriel!" the man screamed, tossing his shaggy head, whirling his bare arms aloft. "I have the light of the Word. Nor death nor hell prevail against me, nor that great beast, that old serpent. Come forth from the house of Rimmon and I will tell you a vision. Woe! Woe and the gnawing of tongues! Come!" He leaped down to the ground, and in a weird voice crying, "Come, and I will show you the things that must be hereafter!" began to climb up a tree.

And the congregation of Cornet Tompkins, used to seek the strangest ecstasies of religion, eager as the Athenians for some new thing, streamed out after him. Vainly Cornet Tompkins cried to them not to follow one possessed of devils. Their minds were in turmoil. When men were all equal and as good as the gentry, what might not be true? It was an age of many a wild creed, and many a man awaited eagerly a new revelation. But Cornet Tompkins, wroth for his unspoken sermon, cried out: "Sergeant Bunce, commit this man of Belial into ward!"

The true Puritan temper that made each man free to preach his own faith knew nothing of such discipline yet. The sergeant stood stiff. "I am a poor deacon of the Lord," said he, "and I will lay no hands upon one who comes in His name," and with that he, too, went off to hear of the vision.

Cornet Tompkins was left with hardly two or three gathered together. He came down from his



chair and looked moodily at the scene without. There, high in a tree, like some strange bird of legend, the barebacked man swayed to and fro, screaming. It was a lurid, fantastic dream he had to tell, made up of scraps from the apocalypse and the prophets of denunciation, grotesquely twisted to suit the place and the time. But it was burning with something of a madman's faith, and it awed peasant and soldiery. They gazed at him in earnest.

But Cornet Tompkins groaned as he thought of what they had lost. "Verily, this is an age of false prophets," said Cornet Tompkins, with shaking head, "and he hath seven devils." He looked upon Joan Normandy and the one or two that preferred sanity in their devotions who were left him, humbly expectant still. "To your tents, oh ye people of God. Let us pray that the truth may be made known."

Now Joan Normandy, as she was going out, came upon Colonel Stow. She gave him one swift look of surprise and hurried on. But Colonel Stow, smiling blandly, lounged into the gallery and there let fall a letter upon a window ledge. He was unseen, for of those left Cornet Tompkins was coming down the gallery, his head bowed and wagging in mourning for his spoiled sermon, and Lucinda was waiting for him with an unkind smile.

"I fear your soldiers have heard you preach before, sir," said she.

Cornet Tompkins breathed heavily—his trade was sermons, not repartee—and glared at her, and she

laughed. Then, as he passed her, she saw Colonel Stow. But Colonel Stow, save for one swift glance that spoke, made no account of her, nor laughed. He approached Cornet Tompkins with a grave sympathy. "Sir," says he, "you despoil me of a refreshment. I am come to hear the spirit move you, and you make me less sound than a sucking dove. You promise me bread and give me less than a stone."

Cornet Tompkins turned upon him with a stony stare. "Mock not," he said in a hollow voice, "mock not, that ye be not mocked."

His extreme discomfiture moved Colonel Stow to pity. "Sir," says he gravely, "you do me wrong. I am come but now to hear you, and I find naught to hear. Prithee, what prevents?"

Cornet Tompkins clutched him by the arm and led him to a window. "That prevents, sir." He pointed to the weird, half-naked creature yelling from the boughs. "That prevents. That demoniac. They are all gone after false prophets, and have no mind for the truth."

Colonel Stow looked long. The gentleman was even more surprising than he had hoped. But he preserved a great gravity and shook his head. "I like it not," said he. "I like it not," and shook his head again. "I suspect him much."

"Sir, I suspect him of the devil!" cried Cornet Tompkins.

"I suspect him of playing the devil, which is worse."

Cornet Tompkins gasped. "Who would play the devil but one mad?"

"I suspect him less mad than he would seem."

Cornet Tompkins opened his mouth, and in that state tried to smile. It was impressive. "Sir," says he, "this is a precious thought."

"Look you," Colonel Stow grew more earnest. "What is his errand? Why should he come here? Why seek you out?"

"Sir," says Cornet Tompkins, melancholy again, "'tis plain the devil would put me to shame."

"I doubt the devil wears a King's coat when he is at home," quoth Colonel Stow. "Sir, I see malignancy here. Take heed that he does no work of treason, ay, that he bears no missive from malignants."

Cornet Tompkins was uplifted. "Sir, you say well!" he cried. "You are of a godly understanding. I will take guard. Yea, I will search him out."

"You will do well, sir," said Colonel Stow with a grave enthusiasm. "Search everywhere that he hath been. I wish you well in it." So, well content, they parted. But when Cornet Tompkins meditated upon his search, he could not think the barebacked gentleman had been anywhere save at a window and up a tree.

Away from the house, behind the hedge of roses, Colonel Stow found Lucinda. She gave him her hand with a smile. "Pray, how much are you in this?"

"Nay," said Colonel Stow, "I only felt the gentleman of no coat was made for Jehoiada. At least I see no other use in him. Oh, 'tis so. Jehoiada dislikes him *à merveille*. I think him most wholesome for Jehoiada. But he is to me no more than a convenience. Madame, will you ride to-night?"

"To-night?" Her eyes glowed. "Oh, you are quick. How, then? What of the Puritans?"

"I rely upon Jehoiada to abolish himself. 'Tis the best deed the poor man could do. Make no parade of going, madame. Have only your jewels and such small things to hand. We can take but your mother and you. And here must be no more words. We are foes before the world."

Lucinda laughed deliciously. "I like to play with the world," she said.

Meanwhile Cornet Tompkins had found upon the window ledge a letter that gave his heart delight. He was consoled for the lost sermon and all the triumph of the barebacked gentleman. But his sudden swift desire to catch this last was foiled, for the barebacked gentleman, who had been for some while speaking with tongues not his own, with no more warning hurled himself out of the tree and rushed wildly away, screaming that he was hunting Sathanas. In which dangerous chase none then followed him, so much alarm had he made. But presently after, he came again, and for half a generation there was in Stoke and Weston Turberville (you may read of it in the pamphlets) a sect which prophesied by

the name of the Angel Uriel, and for his greater glory were scant of clothes, till Major General Fleetwood, a person of orderly mind, laid hands on them and compelled them into prison or coats. For the which, despite threats, the angel showed no indignation.



## CHAPTER TEN

### CORNET TOMPKINS SNAPS AT A SHADOW

COLONEL STOW came out from his father something grave. His father had omitted to wish him joy; had also behaved with levity.

"Ay, ay; a man will go when the woman calls. And I should like you less if you did not hear her. . . . Ay, a lad ought to be amusing. . . . And so you'll be for the King. With as fair reason as most, indeed. . . . Oons, there is wisdom in this war. . . ."

It seemed to Colonel Stow that some emotion would have been in better taste. He went with solemn zeal to inspect the work of Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc, who had business concerning horses and saddles that was of importance, but needed darkness rather than light.

The pervading mystery of it completed the alarm of Joan Normandy, suspicious already of the iniquity of Colonel Royston and of Colonel Stow's visit to the ministrations of Cornet Tompkins. When Colonel Stow, desiring to contemplate peace, came to sit beside her in the porch, she received him with eyes of war.

"You are required to love your enemies," Colonel Stow admonished her, "and for mere dignity you should smile at them," which he duly did.

She was no better pleased. "I could like you better if you were an open enemy," she cried.

"But it would be less amusing for me," Colonel Stow protested mildly.

"At least I should not have to despise you and myself."

"I can not conceive that we are so much alike. Pray, despise me alone; you will find it less an effort. More just, also. For what, after all, have you to do with me?"

Her cheeks were suddenly scarlet. "Ah!" it was like a cry of pain. "Ah, I would that I had never seen you!"

"It flatters me that I should thus deeply affect you. But all is well. To-morrow you can believe that I have never lived."

"You are going, then!" she cried angrily.

"Your manner scarce invites me to stay," Colonel Stow remarked.

She flung out her hand to him in hot impatience. "Oh, is all life a jeer and a cheat with you? Can you not be true to yourself?"

"I do not understand the occasion of this homily," said Colonel Stow with dignity.

Joan Normandy gave something of a sneering laugh. "Oh, you are very noble! And you sham a friendship with our officer to tell him lies and cheat

him again. I thought even malignants kept their honor. But you—"

"Perhaps I may be some judge of a soldier's honor, too," said Colonel Stow coldly. "But if you have such a kindness for Jehoiada, child, go tell him I am cheating him."

She turned upon him, gray eyes flaming fierce. "You know that I can not! And I ought! And I hate you!" she cried. "Oh, it is mean in you!" and she started up and sped to the house.

Colonel Stow made figures in the ground with his heel and contemplated them gravely. To him thus engaged came Colonel Royston. "Do you meditate upon your own virtues, Jerry?"

Colonel Stow looked up. "On the contrary," said he.

As that day waned to sunset, Lucinda felt strange forces working about her. The troopers were busy with horses and arms. Cornet Tompkins, whom she was at some pains to observe, went with exultation in his gait and mysterious scripture upon his lips, as thus: "Troop major, of new powder to each man a flask full. Nay, I will put a hook in their mouths. See to it that the carbine locks be spanned. Verily, I will eat fat. Verily, the Lord is against thee, oh Gog." Lucinda was puzzled. It was hard in such spiritual emotions to find the practical hand of Colonel Stow. And all the day long Cornet Tompkins, bent upon a map of the shire, muttered more mysteries. "Moab shall be my wash-pot. Over

Edom shall I cast out my shoe. Alack, Gog. Why tarry the wheels of his chariots, quo' she. Unto every man a damsel or two. 'Ha, ha,' said I to my soul, 'ha, ha.' I behold a wailing in Babylon."

Not till the twilight, not till the troopers were mounting, he sought out Lucinda for her punishment. She was in her mother's withdrawing-room. He ground his heels into the white Bagdad carpet. "Woman," says he, his nose shining with emotion, "thou hast kicked against the pricks, and art full of wickedness even to the brim. I, Jehoiada, am appointed to cast thee down. Go to. Humble thyself. Learn not to mock at the children of light. I have thy naughty paramour his letter, and this night he shall taste the bread of affliction."

Lucinda was white in alarm. This was no sign of deliverance, but a new danger. "I have had no letter!" she cried.

Cornet Tompkins allowed himself to laugh. "Ha, the peril of the Amalekite hurts thee in a tender part. Nay, woman, thou hast no letter, for I have it—I, Jehoiada, the cornet of the Lord. Would that I had the vile fellow that brought it. But it suffices. Thy portion of woe is assured. Harken—" and he read with mouthing sarcasm these surprising words:

I must see you once yet before I go. Ride out to-night to the Monk's pool at Saunderton. Slip away from the Roundhead villains at sundown and I will

await you. Once with me, have no more fear of the Roundheads. I have half a troop of Goring's horse to my back. They will watch over us, and we shall laugh at your sausage-nosed Puritan—

Here Cornet Tompkins stopped to ejaculate: "Oh, Gog, Gog, verily, I will leave but the sixth part of thee!" and he snorted at Lucinda and went on:

Nay, come with me, my life, and you shall be free of him and his kind for ever.

Thy true lover,

From the Bird in Hand

G. B.

At Chinnor.

(This last, in the warmer style, being Colonel Royston's private effort to add probability to the chilly swain of Colonel Stow's design.)

Cornet Tompkins grinned triumphant, and his face shone like a ruddy moon. Lucinda was troubled. The letter was truly mad enough to be Gilbert Bourne's own. She was mightily angry with him. That he should confuse the plans of Colonel Stow and keep her still a prisoner to this maddening Puritan soldier was an infamous folly. She flamed at Cornet Tompkins in an unlovely fierceness, like a trapped beast, and he grinned the more. "Verily, verily, the iron enters into thee and saws thy soul asunder. This it is to wanton with Amalekites." He flaunted the letter before her, and Lucinda was



suddenly white and bit her lip on a cry. For she saw the writing, and it was not by Mr. Bourne. Cornet Tompkins mistook her emotion. "Oh, thou naughty member!" he cried. "Shameless art thou in thy affections for this Assyrian! Oh, Aholah and Aholibah!"

Lucinda snatched her fan from the table and with it slashed at his eyes. "That is the woman's answer, fellow!" she cried. "Go, get the man's!"

Cornet Tompkins, half blind with undesired tears, stepped back unsteadily. "Wanton, wanton, I go!" he cried, "and thou shalt see thy lover in chains, yea, in fetters of iron, till I hang him high as Haman before thy threshold for an abomination and a spy!" Cornet Tompkins loved a rounded sentence. He wiped away his tears and strode with dignity to the door.

Lucinda turned to see her mother crying gently, and made an impatient ejaculation at such folly. "You—you never valued him, Lucinda," said my Lady Weston, sobbing the more. "But—but I would I were his mother." She referred to Mr. Bourne. Lucinda was not concerned in such fruitless emotions. While she was hurrying to the window to know what meant the noise of the troopers' parade, two stalked in and without a word sat themselves down on either side the door. Lucinda had hardly turned upon them before a word of command rang without, and she saw the mounted company wheel and swing away through the dusk. Cornet Tomp-

kins took due strength to deal with that half troop of Goring's horse. Then Lucinda made to run out, but one of her guards rose up against her. "Woman, we are bidden guard you in our presence, and though you be an evil sight to a man of faith, yet will we do it."

Lucinda recoiled all quivering with impatience. The other trooper looked at her and groaned, and shook his head and groaned. "It were well to comfort our souls with a savory exercise," said he, and in a gloomy nasal tone began to recite the mystic parts of Jeremiah. You conceive how he soothed the straining nerves of Lucinda.

But the dull sound of Cornet Tompkins' horsemen had hardly died away when there was a swift scurry over the turf, and even as the recitation of Jeremiah was cut off and its giver moved swiftly to the window, Colonel Stow came in, flushed with ingenuous agitation. "Good sir, give me word! Is Cornet Tompkins within?" says he breathless to the first trooper, who shook a solemn head. "Oh, luckless day!" cried Colonel Stow. "His troop major, then, or a sergeant?"

"Brother, they be gone out to capture an Amalekite, and we only are left. Is it a matter of war?"

"Alack," said Colonel Stow, who was swaying a little upon his toes, "I fear you may think it so," and as he spoke let drive at the man's chin, and, whirling round, met his comrade's rush with another shoulder blow. The first was hardly fallen before Colonel

Royston was upon him and had a noose round his arms and a kerchief in his mouth. Swift and neat likewise Colonel Stow dealt with the other. My Lady Weston screamed her fright, and Lucinda chid her angrily to silence. Fitly trussed and gagged, those two hapless troopers were propped up against the door-posts to contemplate each other.

Colonel Stow, flushed still, but now purely calm, made his bow to my Lady Weston. "Such affairs must always give pain to persons of sensibility, my lady; but I trust we have not been indelicate. Pray, will you ride? Time is short." Then Lucinda whirled her mother away to cloak, and as she passed Colonel Stow she held out her hand. His lips caressed it, and one of the hapless troopers was heard to groan.

With him Colonel Royston remonstrated. "Believe me, you are less hurt than you suppose, and you should be more grateful than you look. I have never seen a neater surprise. It should be an education to you in tactics—which most men only learn by death—an expensive method I would not urge upon you, unless you would die for pure philanthropy."

"Come away, George," said Colonel Stow gruffly, watching the two helpless men. His friend's manners displeased him at times.

Out in the gathering dark Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc waited with four good horses beside their own. Colonel Stow swept a swift glance over the sky. It was clear enough to find the stars if need

were. He laughed. "Night and a ride through the enemy's quarters. What more should a man want?"

"I want less," Colonel Royston admitted. "A woman or so less."

Wherewith the women came, cloaked heavily, each with a large and weighty casket. Colonel Stow took Lucinda. My Lady Weston was crying still, which Colonel Royston observing, "Nay, my lady, 'tis hard enough to quit home," says he gently enough. Anything of the mother would always mellow him. "But you should count on coming again when these rascals are beaten."

"I do not care where I go," said she feebly. "It is Mr. Bourne."

"Oh! Mr. Bourne is more safe than yourself. That matter of the letter was a ruse of ours to get the Roundheads away."

She stared at him, endeavoring to grasp this. She was not quick of wit. Then she gave it up with a sigh. Turning to her horse, she saw Lucinda in Colonel Stow's arms as he swung her to the saddle. "I wish it were Mr. Bourne," she murmured to herself, and was more lachrymose.

Colonel Royston was not sure that he differed.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### COLONEL ROYSTON DESERTS A LADY

THE sky was darkly gray, set with rare stars. They rode through murmurous gloom. Warm wind of the passion of spring moved about them. Close to the strength of that square shoulder, breathing the strange throbbing scents of the night, Lucinda smiled and her bosom was quick. . . . Life was good. Life was good. She had conquered, she and the man. He had broken all her chains, he made all bow to her. She felt in her the wild force of the world beat free. . . . It surged in Colonel Stow, too. Every nerve in him was aware and glad of her eager womanhood. He had won the best of life. . . . He never knew of the white face behind a window of his home that yearned after him through the dark, through tears.

From the heavy gloom of the lane they came suddenly to blither air, to the wide freedom of the vale. All about them the dewy, flower-studded meadows bore a strange ethereal light. Lucinda gave a little glad cry, like a happy child. Then, as Colonel Stow



turned to her, she saw the flash of his eyes and was breathless. "Oh, it is life, it is life with you," she murmured.

"I live to make your life," he said.

"I—I did not know I could feel this. . . . I am glad, glad! It is to have all the power of the world in me."

"I am no man without you. And you without me no woman. Now—now we are lords of life."

She laughed a little. "You and I," and laughed again gladly. They were riding close as troopers in the charge. Her shoulder touched his lightly, and again. "Oh, the night and the joy of the night!" she cried. He could see the surge of her bosom, the silvery cloud of her breath, and her lips dark in the white comeliness beneath her hood.

"Sure, this is our birth night."

"All's new indeed. Yes, and all life is for us. Ah, what does a maid know?"

"Nay, not even what she hath to give."

"And you," she turned upon him in a quick impulse, then gave a queer, scornful laugh. "Do you know naught of yourself? 'Tis you make my heart wild—you! You! You are strong; you are sure. You force things to your will—lightly, lightly, and laugh." Swiftly she flung her hand to him, and as he gripped it and crushed it against his lips: "Oh, ay," she said in a voice of miserable mirth. "Oh, ay, 'tis yours."

"If I take I give," he said.

She looked at him while they rode far. Then she caught his hand and kissed it fiercely. "So. It is so," she muttered. Then with a wild laugh: "Oh, there is power in us—power!"

"You are born for that." He gripped her hand till she bit her lip for the pain. "Woman, woman of my need."

"Yes! Ah, yes! All the world is yes to us now. There is naught denied. Oh, you master me, and I am master of all in you!"

He leaned out of his saddle, he flung his arm about her, and she swayed lithe and glad in the hard strength of it. Her lips were parted in a strange smile.

"There is match light on the right front," said Colonel Royston.

Colonel Stow let her go easily. "Rein up," he said, and peered along Royston's pointing arm. Tiny specks of yellow played will-o'-the-wisp far off. "They fling pickets wide at Aylesbury," he said calmly, and looked up at the stars. It was grass country and studded with trees, but open on either hand. "Take the women, George. Bear away to the south. Alcibiade!" But while Royston, with a sharp, "By the left and with spur!" hurried my lady and Lucinda before him, and set their horses to a sharper pace, the specks of yellow were gathering, and there came the sound of steel.

"Is there danger?" said Lucinda under her breath.

Colonel Royston laughed. "With a lady, madame, there is always danger."

"I have no fear, sir," she cried angrily.

"That is why you are dangerous," said Colonel Royston.

"Is Colonel Stow in danger?" she insisted, imperious.

"If you had never thought of him, it might have been kind," said Colonel Royston sourly. "To think of him now is mere impediment." Lucinda looked at him long.

It is likely that Colonel Royston, being a friend, would have borne hard on any woman who dared an affection for Colonel Stow, and this woman heated his blood all out of reason. With amused disgust he did his best for her, drove her on swift over the meadows, down hill toward Ford brook. There was need.

Challenges rang out behind them. The yellow gleams of the musketeers' matches were multiplied. They heard the mingled din of a troop of horse. "I'gad," muttered Colonel Royston with a doleful chuckle, "we'll have turned out the whole command." And indeed the meadows were aflame far and wide. There was a storm of shouting, orders and oaths; then, amid all the stars of yellow light, the blue flash of powder and volley on volley of musketry. Colonel Royston made up his mind. "God be with you," says he, "for I shall not." And he reined up sharp and went back for his friend.

But before he had gone far, while the musketry still raged furiously, he came upon Colonel Stow and Alcibiade riding at easy speed. "*En avant, George,*" says Colonel Stow with a laugh. "They will be engaged some while yet. Trees never surrender, and there is plenty of match."

Colonel Royston understood. It was a proved device of the German wars. A few links of match, close twisted tow, tied to tree boughs and lit, were as good by night as a battalion of musketry. The Puritan picket, daring not advance on such a force, was still firing heavily.

"Faith," says Colonel Royston, "I'll never more be such a fool as to suppose you need me, Jerry," and they drew up to the women.

Lucinda turned quick on Colonel Stow, and he smiled to her. Then she laughed out. "Oh, I am a fool to fear," said she. "And yet, and yet there was a gallant gentleman here feared for you, too. But I should be wiser."

"You flatter me, madame," said Colonel Royston bluntly. "I had not begun to fear. But I love him better than I love you."

"And I like you for that," said Lucinda, and looked at Colonel Royston for the second time.

"But he'll soon be of another faith," said Colonel Stow, then suddenly turned with his ear to the wind. "Hark!"

The rattle of musketry had fallen fainter, and

now it was wrapped in another sound—singing, a swelling chant.

“Indeed, this is a glorious victory for a *Te Deum*,” said Lucinda through mirth.

“That is not the picket, but an army,” quoth Royston. “Silent!”

There was no doubt of it. Slow, majestic, deep-throated, it was borne down wind:

All people that on earth do dwell  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with mirth, His praise forthtell,  
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed,  
Without our aid He did us make;  
We are His flock, He doth us feed,  
And for His sheep He doth us take.

The two soldiers looked at each other with an unspoken question. Colonel Royston had heard that psalm rise from the sodden plain of Breitenfeld when Gustavus smote the Catholic army to death. Now it came from his foes.

Colonel Stow drew close to Lucinda again. She had no fear. Lithe and gay she rode, and often she smiled, and often spoke to him softly. So they came through the night, past ghostly villages and church towers that loomed in mid-air. With wet feet they made across the dark ford below Waterperry and



climbed the shadowed lane till the wind was cold from the hills and the moon rose close upon dawn. A faint blue light came over all, and through it they moved weirdly, like creatures of dream.

My Lady Weston was swaying in her saddle as they rose by the steep track to Shotover, and Colonel Royston, gentle enough with her, gave her the stay of his arm. But Lucinda rode light. She was pale indeed, but her eyes shone like stars in a windy sky. Before they were over the hilltop the dawn was white and the moon's crescent no more than a pale glimmer of cloud in its midst. Lucinda turned to the call of Colonel Stow's eyes. But a shadow came over her face, and she sighed. "I did not want the day," she said.

Far below, caught in a girdle of white mist, lay Oxford, walls and spires rising through lucid air, a city wrought in silver.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### COLONEL STOW MAKES A MISTAKE

OXFORD was strangely alive. The undergraduates had been driven from their colleges to make room for loyal souls who could buy a lodging dear. The quadrangle of Merton was gay with the Queen's ladies. Christ Church cloisters rang with the quarrels of the King's Council. Each gray gateway from Worcester to Queen's, each sedate lawn and dark stair, glowed with the pomp of women, echoed the statesmanship of zealous men, clashed and rustled with silk and steel.

Oxford had the fashion and business of a capital. Queen Henrietta and Madame Saccharissa devised new stomachers each week, and my Lord Digby exhibited a pretty conceit in hose. The mill of the King's mint rumbled in New Inn. Some fragment of Lords and Commons, a ghost of a parliament, met in the Schools and played at making laws. My Lord Keeper gave justice to silly loyal suitors in the Convocation House. Above all this rang the real note of war. An ugly army of sakers and demiculverins wore the turf of Magdalen, and their swarthy Italian gunners made a barrack of the

cloister quadrangle. Forges glowed in New College, where the armorers wrought the pike heads anew and struggled with the snaps and locks of the carabines. The meadows by the Cherwell were white with tents. Tall pikemen in corselet and morion, little musketeers, armorless, and like mushrooms under their spreading felt hats, blue-coated, big-booted troopers swaggered in disorderly array all across the High Street. Without, on the old walls and the new drawn lines of defense, the undergraduates labored with mattock and spade, grumbling but perforce, save such as could find twelve pence a day to pay the cost of the war.

Colonel Royston spoke unkind words of this piebald town. As a court he held it mean. As a camp he condemned it for gaudy. He desired leave to go into the country and see the flowers grow. Whereby it happened that they came into the Christ Church meadows to see a resplendent throng trampling the fritillarias. But Colonel Royston would not be comforted. "They look like peacocks," he complained; "they sound like peacocks. But peacocks have brains. I have eaten them in Milano."

Down a lane of bared heads and curtsies came one of picturesque gait and a garb of much art—black velvet with cloth of silver. None could have answered a salute with more grace. Colonel Royston, erect as on parade, looked keenly at this elaborate person; he found sentimental eyes and a narrow brow. "I have known kings," said he, "and

that is not one." King Charles went on through his worshipers. Colonel Stow, it is likely, felt a desire to help him.

Going easily amid the loyal company, they came upon one of a southern splendor. His hat and feather were of a vivid blue, and pale blue the wide lace collar that fell over his crimson coat; his crimson hose ended in a foam of lace that filled the tops of his walking boots. All this belonged to a dark, lean, scarred face.

"Strozzi!" said Colonel Royston calmly. "I thought you were hanged."

The Italian smiled. "So did Wallenstein. And now, having got to hell, doubtless he misses me. But one can not be always obliging. I bribed Walter Butler to hang a Greek instead."

"I never liked Butler," said Royston.

"You are quite right, my friend," the Italian agreed pleasantly. "I do not make the world agreeable for others."

"How are you damaging it here?" said Colonel Stow.

"I am colonel in the regiment of artillery. And what have you the felicity to be, gentlemen?"

"We are ourselves. Tell us what there is a chance to be."

The Italian looked at them swiftly, inserted himself between them, and drew them aside. "My friends," said he, "there is a great chance to be nothing. Look! You think here is an army—"

"Not the least," said Colonel Royston. "I think here is a herd."

"And a herd of swine," quoth the Italian, then looked at him with cunning. "But then, my dear friend, why are you here?"

"Strozzi," said Colonel Royston sternly, "we fight for our rightful King."

"Do not talk imbecilities," said the Italian. He drew them farther away from the throng, and his voice fell. "You are come to spy for the others, eh? . . . Oh, do not play at being angry. I have had a mind to do it myself."

"My dear Strozzi," said Colonel Stow, "you do us too much honor in thinking us like yourself."

The Italian shrugged. "You might as well be frank. I would join you, and I should be some use."

"I am always frank with you, Strozzi," said Colonel Stow in a tone of gentle reproach, "because I know nothing puzzles you so much. And this is the pure truth: We have come to fight for the King."

"Then you make the mistake of a fool," said the Italian, not without satisfaction.

"This is encouraging," said Colonel Royston cheerfully. "If we will not be knaves we are plainly fools."

"Oh, I suppose you would have joined Tilly after Leipsic. Have you not heard of the battle in the north on the Marston Moor? That wooden-head Rupert flung his army away, and half England is



lost to the King. Wait a little. We shall lose the other quite easily."

The two looked at each other. Here was the reason of that Puritan psalm of triumph. "I wonder if we have taken a wrong turning, Jerry," said Colonel Royston aloud, but in his heart he was wondering how loyal Lucinda would be if she saw the Puritans conquering.

"Bah, 'tis a lost cause," said Strozzi.

"I like it the better," said Colonel Stow. But Colonel Royston confessed himself of a different temper.

While he spoke they saw a man walking like themselves apart from the rest. He was a big fellow in a scarlet coat, something sparkish in his dress. But his hat was over his brows, and his dark, handsome face lined with pain. The courtier throng was staring at him and laughing, and flinging jeers. "The Palatine looks for his army! His Highness meditates new glory! Rupert le Diable flees from the Saints!"

But Prince Rupert strode by the mockery, alone, unheeding.

Colonel Stow took a pace forward, drew himself up and saluted.

The dark eyes flashed at him. Then Prince Rupert touched his hat and strode on.

Strozzi was laughing. "You make a mistake, my friend. The Palatine will never do anything."

"Perhaps I like mistakes," said Colonel Stow.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### MR. BOURNE IS SORRY

MY LADY WESTON had found lodging in Holywell. Therein Colonel Royston was doing his best to amuse her while Colonel Stow sought her daughter. There was a tiny garden girt with gray stone that bore red wallflowers, and Lucinda took her ease in it. She lay back in her chair white-clad, and her lithe strength gave all its grace. In a rich glow the curls clustered about her brow. Bare neck and shoulder, darker than her dress, as if a mellow light fell about them, were delicately wrought, instinct with life.

"Indeed, you have a wonder of glory to give," said Colonel Stow in a low voice.

A shadow crossed her face. He was perhaps too much in the vein of Mr. Bourne. But, "If I give, I give all," she said, and her gay eyes challenged him.

"I could not take less."

"Are you strong enough to use all of me?" she laughed.

"Is there a power you have I can not help?"

"I wonder." She looked at him long. "Some-

times it seems you can set all of me free to be strong and glad. The night—ah, the night was dear! But it is day now. And sometimes—I wonder—there are needs in me you do not give, and I want more than you.” Colonel Stow did not understand. This differed too vastly from the mood of the night, and the mood of the night was his always. He was a man, and simply made. More than once in life a woman’s candor puzzled him. While she looked at him an innocent question, he was miserably grave—so miserable that she broke out laughing. “Sure, sir, you’ll not bear it hard that a woman should find it tiresome to love one man? ’Tis churlish!”

Colonel Stow endeavored to laugh with her. “If you need another, I’ll forgive you, but not myself.”

“I’ll have no forgiveness,” said she gaily. “’Tis as sour as pity. If you can forgive, you can not love. And all I do is right.”

“I heartily believe it,” said Colonel Stow.

“Alack, poor soul,” quoth she.

“Wherefore you will do my will,” said Colonel Stow calmly.

She laughed deliciously. “I can love you for that.”

Before she guessed, he crushed her against him and kissed her. “’Tis agreed,” said he.

Her neck was rosy. There was wicked mirth in her eyes. “Indeed, that was timely,” said she, and Colonel Stow beheld Mr. Bourne.

Mr. Bourne was a better man than woman. His

shoulders set with a style. He stood a fair, sturdy lad, sure of himself. "I had not hoped for this, madame. It is a rare delight, but—"

"Nay, I fear it will be scarce that," Lucinda murmured, with a swift, mischievous glance for Colonel Stow.

"But I fear these villains distressed you at Stoke?"

Lucinda lay back with one slight arm behind her head. "If you ask why I have come here, sir, faith, I can not tell you," and, smiling wickedly, she looked from one man to the other. "Nay, it puzzles me. But I think you know each other's quality."

Upon which neat hint Mr. Bourne admitted the existence of Colonel Stow in a brief bow. Colonel Stow was more polite. "My compliments upon your transfiguration, sir," says he. "At least you now look real. It is a beginning. We have all to be infants once."

Mr. Bourne flushed and glared—and reverted to Lucinda. "I trust you have not been in danger through me, madame?"

"I shall always be glad you came to me," said Lucinda in a low voice, and while Mr. Bourne flushed again for delight she smiled and looked up at Colonel Stow.

"Indeed, the lad has helped us to a night for which we must always be grateful," said Colonel Stow with an intimate air.

"Are you so sure?" and he saw that strange faint smile of hers.

"Sir," says Mr. Bourne with some heat, "I have a name, and I would thank you to call me by it."

Colonel Stow bowed. "I could not suppose you were proud of it," he explained politely.

"For the service you have done Mistress Weston, sir," cried Mr. Bourne, much wroth, "I thank you; but—"

"I wonder if you will," said Lucinda softly.

"It were, perhaps, better, madame," said Colonel Stow, still with his maddening air of intimacy, "if Mr. Bourne stayed away from your presence till he grows up."

Lucinda laughed. Mr. Bourne, crimson and stammering, approached Colonel Stow, his hand on his sword. "I am sure my mother needs me more than you, gentlemen," said Lucinda and fled away.

Mr. Bourne was left confronting Colonel Stow, breast almost upon breast. He was plainly in the extreme of wrath; Colonel Stow as plainly calm.

"There must be an explanation between us, sir," said Mr. Bourne hoarsely.

"I am afraid you are a little dull, Mr. Bourne."

"Understand me, sir," cried Mr. Bourne, tapping the cup hilt of his sword.

"Oh, I understand you. I wish you could understand anything else."

"I invite you to a walk in the meadow, sir."

"*Soit*," said Colonel Stow calmly. "I assure you we shall both come back."

Mr. Bourne leading at a high and haughty gait,



Colonel Stow following with his natural sobriety, they strode out of the house and off down Long Wall. From behind a curtained casement Lucinda watched them go, and her eyes sparkled joy. Then she ran off to Colonel Royston.

Half way down Long Wall Mr. Bourne turned on Colonel Stow. "There is good ground between Merton Garden and the Cherwell, sir, where we are not like to be disturbed." Colonel Stow bowed. "Another matter, sir. If this be not bloodless we shall be required to give a cause for the quarrel. You will concede that a lady's name should not be made vulgar."

"You take yourself too seriously, Mr. Bourne," said Colonel Stow with a smile. "But if your dignity needs a fairy tale, why, as I remember, your indignation began at some talk of babes. Let us say we disagree concerning the fashion of babies' clothes."

Mr. Bourne made an angry exclamation, and, turning, strode fiercely on.

Close upon Cherwell bank, where the kingcups glowed, they found short grass and the light falling fair through the willows. Mr. Bourne was for engaging at once. "Do you insist that I should sweat?" said Colonel Stow plaintively, and made a gesture of taking off his coat.

"As you will and how you will, sir," cried Mr. Bourne. "Prithee, do not delay."

"There is plenty of time in your life yet, believe





me," said Colonel Stow, and was meticulous in folding his coat.

The swords crossed. Gilbert Bourne came on with fierce vigor and skill. He had the best of the English style. Colonel Stow knew that and some others, but Mr. Bourne exercised him. It was necessary to check the lad's fervor. After a parry of prime Mr. Bourne drew back his blade to make a complicated attack. Colonel Stow gave point in a stop thrust. It was all but home in the throat. Mr. Bourne came on, fighting keenly, and more keenly still as his blade was countered again and again, till his play was more fierce than safe. To one wild rush Colonel Stow threw back his left foot and dropped his body. While Mr. Bourne's blade gleamed idle over his head, he straightened his arm and his point shot round Mr. Bourne's side, cutting a neat line in the lace shirt. It might as easily have been in the heart. Mr. Bourne knew that as well as Colonel Stow. He recovered and sprang back, and hesitated a moment, his eyes searching Colonel Stow's amiable face. Then he came on again, but with more caution, and Colonel Stow found a use for all his skill. Mr. Bourne was fighting for his sword's honor. His anger was under the curb. He called on himself for every trick of the art, and he had more of the quickness of the schools than remained with the soldier of many campaigns. Colonel Stow was pressed hard. He fought it out coolly. He

could trust his strength to see Mr. Bourne weaken. But each minute had close perils.

"Thunder of God!" It was a rattling German oath, and with it the swords were struck up and a big fellow sprang between them. "Is there no foe without, that cavaliers should fight each other like rams? Put up your iron, Gilbert." It was Prince Rupert.

"'Tis an affair of honor, sir," said Gilbert sulkily.

"Your honor is to obey. Put up, man, or you have to do with Rupert. Who is this gentleman? Ah!" He knew the man who had saluted him. "Who are you?"

Colonel Stow made his salute again. "Jeremiah Stow, sir, lately colonel in the service of the Duke of Weimar, and anxious to be in yours."

"So." The dark brows bent. "And in whose service are you killing Mr. Bourne?"

Colonel Stow laughed. "Sir, if you saw our last passes, you must know it was not Mr. Bourne who was like to need a coffin."

"Indeed, sir," says Mr. Bourne, "Colonel Stow fights to please me, not himself—and hath shown more courtesy than I."

"So." Prince Rupert looked from one to the other. "What is the quarrel?"

Colonel Stow smiled with intention on Mr. Bourne, who blushed furiously. "Why, sir, there is an age when a man hates to be called a boy, and longs to be taken solemnly. I have offended Mr.



Bourne in both parts. I have no gift for being solemn, but I will promise Mr. Bourne to do my best with him hereafter. His sword-play is at least no jest."

"Colonel Stow does himself an injustice, sir," said Mr. Bourne quickly. "If he had willed it I had been on the turf."

"Faith," quoth Prince Rupert, clapping a hand on either shoulder, "you are neither slaughterers in earnest, and you do yourselves an injustice to play at it. I will see you join hands."

"I shall be glad if Mr. Bourne can be my friend," said Colonel Stow.

Mr. Bourne flushed—a struggle was plain in him—then suddenly he gripped Colonel Stow's hand. "You are always to outdo me," he said in a low voice. Then turned to Prince Rupert. "Indeed, sir, I owe more to Colonel Stow than I can repay. I would pray your Highness to consider his claims, for I can warrant him a soldier of courage and resource," and to the embarrassment of Colonel Stow he related the entanglement of Cornet Tompkins.

"I'gad, sir, you are a man for me," cried Prince Rupert. "What was your service in Germany?"

"I can send your Highness letters from the Duke of Weimar and Oxenstierna."

"Do so, and you shall hear from me," Prince Rupert held out his hand.

"I am your Highness' servant—and, if I may speak of him, my comrade, Colonel Royston, who is

as good a soldier as myself and of longer service, seeks a commission, too."

"Let me have his papers. We need men." Touching his hat, the Prince swung away.

"I think we are quits now, Mr. Bourne," said Colonel Stow with a smile.

"There is the other matter," said Mr. Bourne. The two men looked in each other's eyes.

"Sir, I fear you have mistook a kindness for something more," said Colonel Stow.

"You conceive that Mistress Weston honors your affection?" Mr. Bourne cried.

"Sir, I am very sure of it."

There was pity in Mr. Bourne's smile. "I am sorry," he said gently; "she is pledged to me."

"You mistake," said Colonel Stow. Again they looked at each other a while, silent. "You will agree that she should best know?" said Colonel Stow, with something of a whimsical smile.

Mr. Bourne looked pity again. "I am sorry," he said. "I am sorry."

Colonel Stow found him irritating, and was glad that the chapel bells alarmed him, and he fled to his post in the King's Guard.

Colonel Stow went off to speak with Lucinda. He did not see any humor in the affair.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### COLONEL ROYSTON STAYS BY A LADY

WITHOUT ceremony Lucinda drew Colonel Royston away from her mother. "I must speak with you at once, sir." Colonel Royston pretended no pleasure as he rose. My Lady Weston was left alone in that placid unhappiness she knew best. Colonel Royston was taken to the garden. "Sir, your friend and Mr. Bourne are gone away in anger together, for a duello, as I believe."

Colonel Royston allowed himself the smile of a cynic. "I congratulate you," said he.

He brought the blood to her cheeks. "You are insolent, sir," she cried.

"It is amusing," said Colonel Royston.

Lucinda stared at him. He was a new kind of man. And to her, it may be, his roughness was strength. At least he challenged her, and she was ready. "You are little concerned for your friend," she said with a sneer.

"My concern is for the other gentleman," said Colonel Royston grimly. "So I will preserve your own admirable calm."

"Pray, why should I be troubled by their danger?" she cried.

"God forbid I should help you to emotion," said Colonel Royston heartily. "Yet each of these two silly gentlemen has run some small risk of life for you."

"And am I not worth a risk?" she said softly. She faced him, lithe and white, with a strange, mocking smile.

"If you did not think you were you might be," said Colonel Royston.

"Am I the weaker for knowing myself?"

"Is any man the stronger for knowing you?"

"You do not answer," she said gently. "You only hate me. Why?"

"It happens that you were made for that," said Colonel Royston.

"Because I have won your friend?" And the fire went out of her eyes, and they were grave and kindly.

"Because you have won what you can not value."

"Perhaps I know," she said in a low voice. "Perhaps I—I am sorry. . . . Oh, I would I were more than I am, or less." Colonel Royston was surprised at the subtlety, and turned to face her. "Is it my fault a man should love me?" she said, with something of a sad smile.

"Ay, and his ill fortune," replied Colonel Royston.

"Oh, your words try only to strike!" she cried, her

brow drawn. "Why should it please you to hurt me?" and her throat quivered.

"I am no man for women, madame," said Colonel Royston gruffly. "We are best apart," but he did not go, and his face was set in a dark frown as he looked down at her.

"Nay, why will you hate me?" she cried. "What wrong have I done?"

"It were well you should be faithful to my friend," said Colonel Royston.

Her cheeks flamed. She was erect and proud-eyed. "When I plight faith I shall keep it," she said. Then on a sudden pressed her hand to her temple. "Oh, I know, I know!" she cried. "He is noble—nobler than I, I think. And yet—and yet—ah, can you guess how a woman yearns for strength, hard, cruel strength?"

It was a shot that hit the white. Colonel Royston himself thought his friend too kindly—loved him, perhaps, for the weakness, yet thought him less. Himself, being hard enough, was the greater in his own eyes. He smiled upon her for her good taste in men. But he was still loyal. "You will find Colonel Stow strong enough, madame," said he.

"I can not tell," she murmured. "And I would not hurt him. It is difficult." She was pale, and she trembled a little. Colonel Royston signed mutely to a chair. "Nay, walk with me a while." She passed her bare arm through his, and together they paced the turf, she a slight, white thing to his broad



strength. "If he could make me afraid," she murmured to herself. Then louder: "I can not go the straight ways, you know. There is something wild in me. If he can not master it, I am not sure—I am not sure."

"Yet I have heard you call him master," said Colonel Royston.

"I wanted to believe it," she said simply. "Nay, he is clever, and a man who does things dazzles me. Oh, he is adroit, and frank, and gay, and that night I hoped—I hoped—" She sighed, then swiftly changed her tone. "But if I were his, you would hate me. You want your friend."

Colonel Royston stiffened. "I like to think he wants me."

"You are not modest," she laughed.

There was something grim in Colonel Royston's smile. "Faith, madame, there is not much modesty in this garden."

"You are not a coxcomb, but a man. Why should I pretend to you? Oh, I loathe the women that must be always hiding behind a veil."

"Yet there is a decency in clothes," said Colonel Royston.

"Clothes are for the people one does not trust. Do you never take off yours, sir?"

"'Tis an unedifying sight, madame." He looked down at her with a grim smile. "You would see no better than a hungry beast."

"Hungry—for what?"

"For all there is in life."

"Good—and evil?"

"If it has a relish. What is a man for but to taste all and get his fill of what he likes best?"

"And what is your liking, sir?"

"I'll tell you when I die."

"You have not found it yet?"

"I have found a thousand things worth living for, and none worth dying for—a thousand things to like, and none to love."

"Not even a woman?" said Lucinda, smiling.

"All the women I ever knew have too many clothes—or nothing inside the clothes."

"I am not like that," said Lucinda meekly.

Colonel Royston laughed. "You! No, you are white flame in a woman's body."

A moment her hand closed lightly on his arm. She drew in her breath. "You know me," she said in a low voice.

"And, by Heaven, you are worth knowing," muttered Colonel Royston. His face was something flushed. They paced on a while in silence, and she watched him with sparkling eyes intent. But Colonel Royston had his head back and was staring full in front. With a queer laugh he looked down at her. "For good or ill," said he.

"Indeed, I fear you'll always be able to laugh at me," said Lucinda.

"It will be mighty good for you."

"So I'll take you as medicine."

"I'll strive to be fitly nasty."

"Will you find it an effort, sir?" Lucinda laughed. And they saw Colonel Stow.

"Have you buried him, Jerry?" cried Colonel Royston.

"Mr. Bourne is my very good friend," said Colonel Stow.

Lucinda blushed and stood still. "Oh, lud," quoth Colonel Royston. "And have you not marked him?"

"I am glad I did not," said Colonel Stow.

Colonel Royston whistled, and, "You are very compassionate, sir," Lucinda sneered.

"I can not guess why you should be bloodthirsty, madame," said Colonel Stow sharply.

"Nay, keep your censure for who will endure it!" she cried.

"Tira lira," Colonel Royston concluded his melody. "I profess most men would think you owed Mr. Bourne some small matter of a sword-point, Jerry."

"Mr. Bourne has been in a mistake," said Colonel Stow, and came up to Lucinda. She met him with a defiance that made her lovely. "Madame, Mr. Bourne conceives that he has some right in you. It were—"

"Is it my fault if Mr. Bourne is a fool?"

"Perhaps," said Colonel Stow, with the beginning of a smile. "And now you will make him wise again. You will wake him from this mistake."

Her bosom rose. "You take a high tone, sir!" she cried. "It may be you are in a mistake, too."

"Am I?" said Colonel Stow. Then he caught her hands, and, though she leaned all her body away from him, he drew her close till her breast touched his. Her neck was rosy. Her eyes shone dark. "Do I presume?" he said in a low voice. "You know." And so held her a moment, her breast beating light against his, his breath in her hair, while she feared and longed for what might come next. For Colonel Royston stood by, frowning and grim. But Colonel Stow let her go gently, and with a quiet, "I am your servant, madame," made his bow and kissed her hand. . . . She, intent on him, was a moment before she thought of offering it to Colonel Royston. But Royston, with the briefest bow, turned on his heel and followed his friend.

"What did you do with the boy?" said Colonel Royston gruffly, as they turned into the street.

"Made a hole in his shirt. He needed no more."

Colonel Royston grunted. "The fact is, you are too much the lady, Jerry," says he.

"Men should love me the more."

"And what of the women?"

"There is one that matters, and I shall content her." This confidence annoyed Colonel Royston, who looked sour enough. "I'gad, 'twas a quaint fight, George. The lad will be no ill sword when he toughens. He exercised me. I was fairly praying for him to tire, when in strikes the Palatine and

would have us embrace. I believe I pleased Monsieur Rupert. He'll give me a regiment if I know men. So I spoke a word for you, too. And I think our affair is done."

"Ay," says Royston with a sneer. "A regiment for you and a company for me. Ay, you are charitable."

Colonel Stow stared. He was not used to jealousy in his friend. "Faith, George, I am selfish enough with you. You've given too much for me. But in this there is no more for me than you. If the Palatine will not give us two like commissions, the better is yours."

"No, i'gad!" cried Royston, flushing. "I am a cur, Jerry."



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“WHY COME YE NOT TO COURT?”

**I**T was a court of fantasy. No man looked what he was. No man said what he meant. Each much-curled dame played at being the goddess she was called. All the air was heavily fragrant of bows and lofty conceits, and Colonel Stow found it something hard to breathe. He was not able to tell Chloris that her voice called his fleeting soul away, nor swear to Saccharissa that her beauties employed his utmost sight, as the first dawn the eyes of Adam. He could not profess himself prostrated like the groveling Caliban by the courteous grace of a gentleman who made way for him, or liken King Charles on his entry to the white sun waking the splendors of all the subject flowers his light had made. In such a world he felt himself the country lad in worsted who was a judge of furrows and right harrowing.

But there was splendor. Diamonds and white bosoms were gay all down the great hall of Christ Church, and men, too, sparkled in jewels, and vied with the women's silk and brocade. The scarlet

gowns of doctors of divinity were no more than a simple chord in the loud melody of color. Colonel Royston approved. This was to his taste. Thus gorgeous a court should be. He fed on the luxury of it, and, proud of his own simplicity, despised them all, and most of all the elaborately posing King. Indeed, King Charles posed well—a stately melancholy in cloth of silver that set off his dark eyes and hair. His Queen, for all her golden gown, was but a foil to him. Her weak, round beauty made his sad sentiment look noble. “You might almost take him for a man to-night,” said Colonel Royston. While he spoke came through the courtiers one who was that at least. Prince Rupert, taller by a head than the men who tilted eyebrows and sneered as he passed, made a mock of their splendor. Colonel Stow could see the faces change ludicrously. Prince Rupert was in simple dove gray from head to heel, and even his sword hilt plain, but across his breast was the broad blue riband of the garter. The Palatine knew how to dress. Colonel Stow honored the ability of it with a whimsical smile. Since these men were to be swayed so, so they must be swayed. One would not, however, admire them for it, nor perhaps the man who cared to deal with them so.

The Prince took him by the elbow and had him out of the throng to the stairway. “Look you, sir, I have a word for you. I have read your papers, and they like me. I never knew Oxenstierna could praise before. I think you have seen more service than

myself. I see you were with Turenne. Why did you leave him?"

"M. de Turenne has a brutality of manner," said Colonel Stow.

"He is like a cat," the Palatine admitted. "A quarrel, eh?"

"He proposed a hanging which I could not permit."

"Was it your own?"

"No, sir; a prisoner."

"So. If that is your temper, you are the more use. Look you, sir, war here is not the war of Germany. It is all policy and quarter. They call me Rupert le Diable, but, thunder of God! if these English knew what war could be, they would worship me. Understand me, sir," the brown eyes blazed suddenly, "if you can not hold your men, you are no use to me."

"I brought a squadron of Croats through Saxony after Wittstock, and no woman was the worse for them."

"Good." The brown eyes twinkled. "I am only asking you for miracles. Well, you will have no such rogues as Croats, but you will have fools who think they have rights. Oh, the devil! Are you the nineteenth cousin of any great house, yourself?"

"My father is a yeoman squire in Buckingham. I know no better of my blood than that."

"Thank God for it!" Rupert clapped him on the shoulder. "The army is crawling with fellows who have some dirty connection with dirty blue blood.

Well, sir, if you will, you may have your commission to a regiment of horse."

"I humbly thank your Highness. And I dared to speak for my friend?"

"Oh, ay, your friend. You can give him a squadron."

"By your Highness' leave—if I might take the squadron and Colonel Royston the regiment. He is an older soldier than I."

"Ods blood, here 'is a friendship! Take care. There was never much got by playing Jonathan." But he looked at Colonel Stow with a kindly, boyish delight. "Well, tell me the man's service," said he, and he linked arms and walked out to the freshness of the night.

—There was that within for which the Palatine had little taste. To the strains of flageolet and clavichord a smooth lad of the Christ Church servitors, tricked out in a woman's clothes, was singing a fantastical lament as Io, the wretched love of Jove. Now, Io, you recall, was through Juno's jealousy tormented by an immortal gadfly. So when the boy ended with a great tremolo:

Woe is me that I am fair!

Woe is me that I am young!

Woe is me, for my soul is stung

Ever! Ever! Ever!

my Lord Jermyn was pleased to make him a low bow and took up the doleful tune:

Sister Io, you are dull;  
Sister Io, go and try,  
Sister Io, to kill your fly,  
Spider! Spider! Spider!

It was within the comprehension of her Majesty. She abandoned herself to laughter, and at once all the court honored this wondrous wit. Even the royal melancholy beside her condescended to a childish smile. The world might nudge and whisper behind his back, but he could not dream of jealousy against my Lord Jermyn. Yet of that queer *ménage* of three, the best brains were in my Lord Jermyn's head. The Queen was urging him to sing now, and he denied only long enough to win a tap of her fan. Little and sleek, in a splendid red brocade, with a chain of rubies round his neck that he could never have paid for, he posed till he waked all expectation. Then he whispered a word to the flageolet, and in a pleasant voice enough:

Oft have I mused the cause to find  
Why love in ladies' eyes should dwell;  
I thought because himself was blind  
He looked that they should guide him well.  
And sure his hope but seldom fails,  
For love by ladies' eyes prevails.  
But time at last hath taught me wit,  
Although I bought my wit full dear;  
For by her eyes my heart is hit.  
Deep is the wound, though none appear.



Their glancing beams as darts he throws,  
And sure he hath no shafts but those.

I mused to see their eyes so bright,  
And little thought they had been fire;  
I gazed upon them with delight,  
But that delight hath bred desire.  
What better place can love desire  
Than that where grow both shafts and fire?

He acted it to the Queen, and she laughed back to him and conquered with her fan, and at last was pleased to feign displeasure at his boldness. So that there was no royal sign given for applause, and my Lord Jermyn was honored with a silence. Then he, keeping up the silly game she loved, must needs play pique, and turned away from her. So, peacocking it through the throng, he came upon Lucinda. My Lord Jermyn was a connoisseur. This lithe, fierce creature took his eye. A sea-green dress clung to her, and there were emeralds in the gorgeous mass of her hair that dared a happy disorder. She bore herself nobly. The slim neck and shoulders were no alabaster, but warm with quick life. My Lord Jermyn appraised her, and met eyes as bold as his own.

"'For by her eyes my heart is hit,'" he cried quickly.

"A small mark, my lord."

"A poor thing, madame, and not now mine own."

"Why, have you mislaid it?" says she, with a swift glance at the Queen.

"I have dropped it in your bosom, madame," replied my Lord Jermyn.

"A cold habitation."

"The flame of my desire will melt those walls of snow."

"And your heart be drowned, like a blind puppy."

"You fence with a sharp sword, madame," cried my Lord Jermyn, something hurt.

"I would be a foil to no man, my lord."

"Nay, you are made to be a man's breastplate."

"I know no man big enough to wear me."

My Lord Jermyn made a gesture of despair. "Then, madame, you condemn the creation. And you were made to be its joy."

"I had rather be my own."

"All men are yours," said my Lord Jermyn.

Lucinda smiled. "While I am not theirs, I am well content."

"Ods blood!" cried my Lord Jermyn in a fine transport, "there is one man I envy and I hate to death." Then with a grin: "And pity."

"Who is it?" asked Lucinda in sweet innocence.

"Ay, who is it? I am on fire to know. Who is the happy man that makes those cruel eyes melt, that still bosom throb? I would condole with him—or kill him."

"I wish I knew him," said Lucinda, smiling. "Or will you be he, my lord?"

My Lord Jermyn kissed her hand. "And I will do more at your convenience."

"Nay, if you care for my convenience, you care not for me."

"I protest!" cried my Lord Jermyn, and was probably in earnest, "I protest you are the most piquant mouthful of a woman that ever was created!"

"But I doubt your appetite," Lucinda laughed.

"Doubt anything but that!" cried my Lord Jermyn, and, chancing to turn a little, saw the Queen frown black. He laughed and engaged Lucinda more closely. "Nay, madame, you have brought wild life into this dull court. You shall enflame us, you shall make us mad. I would give my soul—or my little finger—to make you mad for me."

"It would surely be disloyal of me," said Lucinda, with a quick eye upon the Queen, "and perhaps not amusing."

"Oh, I engage for that!" cried my Lord Jermyn. "Nothing is so amusing as to embrace me. It has so many sensations."

Lucinda considered him with mockery. "Well, I will take you for holidays, my lord. But indeed, I must have another for my daily bread."

"It is dry, the daily bread," said my Lord Jermyn. "But you, madame, are like wine with it to make the sacrament of life." He pruned himself having achieved such a conceit.

"Alack, my lord, while I make you think of spir-

itual things, you remind me of nothing but the earthly."

"It proves that we are apt for each other, like soul and body."

"Ay, my lord, in most of us they quarrel doughtily."

"And the soul yields to the body's eloquence," and my Lord Jermyn possessed both her hands. "Madame, it is an omen."

"Of eternal punishment, I fear."

"With me even that would be agreeable," says my lord modestly, and kissed her hands and her arms. Then sidewise he looked at the Queen. Her displeasure was not lovely. My Lord Jermyn, who had some likeness to a monkey, thought of a new mischief. "But I confess, madame, you were made for an angel."

"Do I not succeed as a woman?"

"Ay, faith. But I see you with a golden harp. I hear your heavenly voice. Confess it, you sing?"

"No heavenly songs, my lord."

"The better fit for court. Let me lead you to the musicians. Nay, I will not be denied. I am her Majesty's master of the revels."

"Her Majesty will not revel in this, my lord," said Lucinda, with a swift, laughing glance from the Queen's ill grace to him. But she suffered herself to be led.

Lucinda enjoyed herself. She had no illusions

about my Lord Jermyn, who was to her as mean a thing as Prince Rupert had called him. But my Lord Jermyn drew the eyes of the court. My Lord Jermyn could help her to do the like. Once on the stage, she was sure of her power to dazzle and thrill. She saw herself already an uncrowned Queen.

My Lord Jermyn aping it about her, she spoke with the musicians. The clavichord broke through the rustle of talk. It was a song, daring on a woman's lips, and there was a dance with it of no cold measure.

A lover I am, and a lover I'll be!  
And hope from my love I shall never be free.  
Let wisdom be blamed in the prudish man-hater,  
For never to love is a sign of ill nature!  
But she who loves well, and whose passion is strong,  
Shall never be wretched, and always be young.

With hopes and with fears, like a ship on the ocean,  
Our hearts are kept dancing and ever in motion!  
When our passion is pallid and our fancy would fail,  
A little kind quarrel supplies a fresh gale!  
But when the doubt's cleared and the jealousy's gone,  
How we kiss and embrace, and can never have done!

Her lithe body gave all its grace to the dance. She acted the words with vivid gestures of allure. When at last the swift medley of color and womanly form was still, and she stood panting delicately, smiling, with a touch of red in her cheeks, even



though the King maintained his sentimental sadness and the Queen was moody and gave no lead, the court was quick with my Lord Jermyn to do her honor. The gentlemen, and even some of their ladies, crowded about her—my Lord Carnarvon, my Lord Wilmot, my Lord Digby, and Madame Saccharissa, too. Lucinda had her reward.

With hot cheeks and kindling eye, Colonel Royston watched that dance. As it ended and they crowded round her, he turned and saw beside him Colonel Stow. "She is glorious, Jerry!" said Colonel Royston, and his voice was unsteady. But it was plain enough, from the gloom of Colonel Stow's brow, that he was of another mind. "What, man! You are not a puling Puritan! Hath she not a splendid life?"

Colonel Stow forced a laugh. "I have quiet tastes, I think," he said.

Royston fell back a step. "By Heaven, Jerry, you are not the man for that woman!" he muttered.

"Perhaps I know her better than you, than these—" his lip curled as he looked at the courtiers about her. Colonel Royston, who was flushed, bit his dark moustachios on an oath. "But I came to seek you, George. The Palatine asks for you." Royston grunted and followed without a word.

Prince Rupert stood in the quadrangle, looking up at the sky. "Saturn is red to-night," he said. "What would Booker argue of that, I wonder?" Colonel Stow and his friend, who were no astrolo-

gers, made not a guess. Prince Rupert returned to the world. "So you are Colonel Royston," and he looked the big man up and down. "You are fortunate in your friend."

"I shall try to deserve my fortune, sir."

"No man deserves his friend," said the Palatine with his boyish cynicism. "I'gad, sir, what can you do for a man who would give up his regiment to find you one?" Colonel Royston became pale and looked at his friend strangely. "That is what Jerry Stow would be doing," said Rupert, laughing and slapping the uncomfortable Colonel Stow on the shoulder. "Well, sir, I like him too well to do without him. And I find you too good a soldier not to use you. I have seen your papers and heard more of you, and faith," he put his elbow into Colonel Stow's ribs, "I think your deeds have lost nothing in the telling. There is a Welsh regiment of foot forming. Faith, it will need some forming, but I hear you are a doctor of the Swedish drill. The commission is yours if you care to have it. What do you say, man?"

Colonel Royston saluted. "I am your Highness' obliged servant."

"So. You will wait on me in the morning." He glanced from one to the other. They were both ill at ease. "Two is company, I take it," said he with a laugh. "Zounds! this affection is out of date. Good night to you."

Then Colonel Stow linked his arm with his friend's. "So that is well, George," said he.

"Ay, you have cut a mighty fine figure," growled Royston. Colonel Stow started in utter amaze. Royston drew away. "And what good is it to us? The Palatine is but a fool's general. You know it as well as I. And you have seen what kind of honor they have for him here."

"But general he is," Colonel Stow expostulated. "And if we are to have commissions, they must come from him."

"Oh, ay, if you like to crawl and beg favors," cried Royston. "It is not my way."

"You are unreasonable, George," said Colonel Stow mildly.

But Royston was beyond that. "Oh, ay, I am unreasonable. And you are to pose as chivalrous and make me mean. And I am to take your leavings while all the world praises your nobility. It is always so. By God, am I made only to be your foil?"

"I am sorry, George. I—"

"Oh, curse your smoothness!" cried Royston, and flung away in a rage.

Colonel Stow stood looking after him, hurt and hopelessly puzzled.

And Colonel Royston stamped away through the night in an aching fever of rage. He was puzzled by it, and raged the more in a futile hate of all the world.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### COLONEL ROYSTON BREAKS HIS SWORD

YOU can hardly conceive Mr. Bourne at peace all this while. He was as sure of Lucinda as of himself, but of pure charity and good fellowship it was necessary to shatter Colonel Stow's assurance. The poor gentleman must not be let cheat himself more. To fulfil which philanthropic purpose Mr. Bourne, as soon as his duties of the King's Guard could spare him, sought the aid of Lucinda.

It was an afternoon of swift showers, and the walls glistened with jewels. Lucinda, all silver and cream, yawned at her window over the prudish poems of Mr. Habington. She received Mr. Bourne with a smile as likely to be more amusing. He was at least gorgeous in his scarlet and blue. "You are grateful as sunshine, Gilbert," she cried, tossing the book away. "That man makes love like an angel with a cold."

"Is my way better?" said Mr. Bourne, kissing her hand.

"Yours? Well, you are like a pleasant child."

Mr. Bourne frowned. There was a savor in that of the ideas of Colonel Stow. "You did not think so once, madame," said he.

"Oh, no," she laughed readily. "Once you bored me. That was when you thought me a goddess." She made a face of mock horror, and he smiled against his will.

"Faith, you are nothing but a woman, with all the torment of your sex."

"If you can laugh at me, I shall love you," she said, and signed him to a place at her side in the window-seat. She tossed back the curls that glowed about her brow and freed the grace of her neck from its lace scarf.

Mr. Bourne had not much power of laughter, least of all when his eyes were on her. He looked long. "Nay, I am not come to jest," he said. "Lucinda—we must be frank now."

"Gilbert, my dear, you could never be anything else," she laughed.

"Ay, and you, you must understand—"

"I understand you to your finger-tips."

"And on my soul I understand you," cried Gilbert, and doubtless believed it.

But he saw that strange, wise, mocking smile of hers. "If I thought so," she said slowly, "why, I might be afraid of you. And you—would be happy."

"I am happy," he said gravely. "And God forbid that you should fear me." She laughed. "Yes,



"I am happy," and he took her hand. "But others must know that I am happy, Lucinda."

"My dear friend," said Lucinda, "at knowing another happy, one is only in a bad temper." And she took her hand back.

Mr. Bourne laughed. "I shall make all men unhappy indeed."

"You are not big enough," said Lucinda, shaking her curls.

"Nay, but you are my queen, and when I possess you—"

"You will have grown," said Lucinda sharply.

Mr. Bourne stared at her. "Dear, I know I am all unworthy," he said in a low voice.

"That I have never doubted."

"But in truth I love you more than life. You are my honor and my soul."

"It is a little tedious for me."

Mr. Bourne made an exclamation. "Once you did not think so."

"My dear Gilbert, while you were not serious, you were amusing."

"Ah, Lucinda, this is no jest!"

"If you could but see it!"

"It is my whole life and yours, and we dare not play with it."

"What else is life for?" Lucinda laughed.

Mr. Bourne frowned. "I do not understand you of late."

"Faith, my friend, you never did."

"Is it—"

Before the question was ended Colonel Stow came in.

"In good time, sir," Lucinda cried. "Here is Mr. Bourne as serious as a thunderstorm."

Colonel Stow bowed to Mr. Bourne. "A very wholesome affair," he said gravely.

"Yes, in good time, sir," cried Mr. Bourne. "I can now ask Mistress Weston to tell you what she promised me."

Lucinda gave a swift glance from one man to the other, but she did not hesitate. "A smile while you live and a sigh when you die," she cried.

Colonel Stow turned to Mr. Bourne.

"Are you not pledged?" Mr. Bourne said in a strange voice.

She laughed. "Gilbert, my dear, you are very tragic." He made an impatient gesture. "And it becomes you deplorably."

"Nay, answer me!" he cried hoarsely.

Colonel Stow drew away.

"My friend, there is no return for worship. You have worshipped me, so why should I care for you?" The lad flinched and was white, and turned unsteadily away. "Oh, Gilbert, pray be amusing. That is your *métier*."

He faced round upon her. He was white still to the lips, and his eyes misty. He tried to speak. "I—I am sorry," he muttered, and made his bow and burst out.

Lucinda smiled at Colonel Stow. "With his next love, he will think himself more and her less, and it will be the happier for both of them. *Mon Dieu*, he has been an entertainment!"

But Colonel Stow was entirely grave. "You do yourself an injustice, madame."

"To deny myself to Mr. Bourne? Sure, you would have me too generous, sir."

"To jeer at a man's devotion."

Her eyes flamed. "What right have you to rebuke me?"

"No one in the world has the right but me."

"Are you to order my life?"

"Your life is mine, your honor mine."

She sprang up. She flung her arms wide. "To no man! To no man in the world!" she cried, and her voice was glad. She stood against him, maiden in the pure, gentle hue of her dress, passionate with vivid lips, and the glow of her hair and her eager eyes, all fiercely lovely.

"How little you know!" he said, and laughed a little. "Are you glad to be a queen that is deaf and dumb and blind? You are that, no more than that, in your maidenhood. You'll never know life without me. The power of you sleeps till I waken it."

"My power?" She threw the laugh back at him. She was defiant still, but something of the fierceness was gone out of her. "My power? Ask other men of that. The boy that is gone—ay, and stronger than he. Have I no power over them?"

"Yes, power to bewilder them, and torture them, and make them mad. Do you think you were made for no better than that? By Heaven, it shall not be!" He strode to her and gripped her hands. His eyes were flaming with a rare light. She felt the keen strength of him, manhood at war with her own nature. "You! You must give men heart to dare and work. You are to help life, not break it. With me and through me, we together to order and guide the people. I have not the force without you, you are blind without me. We together, we are power." He crushed her hands in his. "What! Do you deny me? I am yours as you are mine. Mine—mine to take to myself and use." He flung her hands away and grasped her waist. "You know it—yes, you know it, body and soul! They cry to me. Is it not true?" She was panting a little and flushed. She had turned her face from him. He took her chin in his hand and made the glistening eyes look up to his. "You shall own it, by Heaven! Are you not throbbing for me? You, the force of life. I am your guide. Yield yourself. Yield!"

She looked long, silent. . . . Suddenly she flung her arms about him and clasped him passionately to her breast, crushing herself upon the harsh buff coat. He drew her face from his shoulder and kissed her fiercely. . . .

Her arms fell loose about him; she freed herself and stood leaning against his shoulder, trembling a little, looking away. She put her hand to her hot

cheeks and gave a queer, miserable laugh. "Yes, I am yours," she said. His arm was hard about her again, and at the touch of it she drew to him, sobbing. . . . Calmer at last, though her eyes were dark still with tears, she looked up at him with a strange surprise. "Ah, you were wonderful!" she said, drawing a long breath. "I did not know. . . . You have made me not like myself. . . . Ah!" It was like a cry of pain. Her arm closed on him with nervous strength. "Do not fail me!"

Colonel Stow laughed. . . .

It was twilight when he came out. He saw a lucid violet sky, with a tiny star pale in it, but all the west was mellow yet, and the afterglow caressed wall and tower. Rustling by each narrow lane from the river meadows a warm wind came, heavy with the sweet breath of summer. It gave him the poignant mingled fragrance of young grass and may and lime, and it bore his love new strength and his strength new love. He was drunk with life. Like one who walks in a world of visions, where all things are of his realm, where all is subject to him, he swung through the throng of the High Street. The swaggering soldiers, the mincing, laughing girls, were all his people for him to use. He was lord of all. He looked up and laughed. Darkly clear, like deep water, and vast beyond the sense of man, rose the dome of the sky. With that immensity of the world he was akin; the strength of it was his strength; he had the secret of its mystery and its



calm. Long he stood still, looking up where the gray spire of St. Mary's sprang glorious to the white glow of the evening star. . . . He knew the strength of man's striving, and the eternal joy of peace. And he was to be a ruler among his people; he felt the surge of his power and its mastery.

In their lodging, in an upper room of St. Aldate's, Colonel Royston did sword exercise by candle-light. He was stripped to his shirt and bare armed, and this way and that his heavy strength swung easily with a ripple of muscle.

Stepping light as a child in a hurry of joy, Colonel Stow ran up and flung the door wide. "George! I am the happiest man alive!" With the draft the candles flickered and guttered and went out, and in the bewildering light from the open door Colonel Royston, who was lunging, misjudged his distance. His sword came against the stone of the chimney-piece harshly. "Is it broken?" cried Colonel Stow.

"At the point," said Royston out of the dark.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### INGEMINATING PEACE

A DISORDERLY crowd in the meadows beyond Wadham was disturbed by Colonel Stow. He required the officers—nay, any officer—of Audley's Horse. And the troopers of Audley's Horse, lounging with dice and tankard before their slovenly tents, bade him to Beelzebub—with whom their officers ought to be—or to the Ship in the Cornmarket—where doubtless they were. Colonel Stow rode off. But he left behind him Alcibiade and Matthieu-Marc, and they were soon putting up a tent. They were approached by some slouching troopers, who, coats all undone, hose gaping at the knee, stood aloof and eyed them with distrust, muttering. Then one cried out: "Look 'e, my buck, what be doing here?"

Alcibiade had a mallet in his mouth. Matthieu-Marc, the pessimist, made the reply. "Gentlemen," said he, "what does any one do here? Tell me, then. I do not understand her, your war. She is like a bad dream." They guffawed at him. Nothing could be more absurd than being foreign. "If you could see yourselves you would not laugh at me, *coquins*," said Matthieu-Marc bitterly. "But, yes! I am droll!

To come to such a war, such soldiers!" He flung up his arms at them and turned to the tent again with the haste of despair.

Alcibiade straightened himself, grinned at them, jerked his thumb knowingly at Matthieu-Marc, and grinned again. "He wants everything better than it is made, gentlemen. Even you. It is an impossible, that dear Matthieu-Marc. But tell, then"—Alcibiade, too, was interested in these unsoldierly soldiers—"at what hour is your troop drill, and your squadron drill how often?"

They guffawed again. "You be an innocent."

"Innocent of all but sin, gentlemen," said Alcibiade politely. "But, *enfin*, you have your parades, *parfois*?"

"Hark 'e, innocent. We Cavaliers do need no foreigners' drillings. We be gentlemen. We do fight."

"I felicitate the enemy," said Alcibiade. "And what do you fight for?"

"Find your own horse and two shillings a day."

Alcibiade waved his hand. "That is no matter for the gentleman *soldado*. Your cause, messieurs, your faith?"

They nudged one another and looked at one another with stupid grins, and agreed that Alcibiade was a natural. While they were enjoying the thought of that, one changed the subject with a simple rudeness. "Who be that tent for?"

"For your colonel, gentlemen," said Alcibiade, and saluted at the name.

The shaggy jaws dropped. "Be your master a foreigner like to you?" says one in a surly amazement.

"He is English altogether. It is his one fault. But he will make you a regiment such as your country has not. A sweet regiment."

They were in no way rejoiced. "If he do try foreign tricks with us, I am sorry for he," says one.

"Messieurs," said Alcibiade sweetly, "when I look at you I also am sorry for him. But if you do try tricks with him I am very sorry for you."

They gaped and glowered at Alcibiade a while and then slouched off to impart the ill news. Alcibiade returned to the tent and Matthieu-Marc. Matthieu-Marc was interjectional in his own tongue. "What a nation! What animals! What a war! Tell me, Alcibiade,"—he struck an attitude of despair,— "why do we waste on these stupids our skill?"

"We seek always honor. If we can made soldiers of these it is honor indeed," said Alcibiade; but even he was something chilled by these slovenly Cavaliers. "Myself, I would like to know why these gentlemen fight at all. Now, with Gustav one fought for the religion, and with Bernhard to make him a kingdom, and one believed in them. But these—they believe in nothing."

"In their shilling a day," said Matthieu-Marc, and made scornful noises like a sheep.

"The others, the enemies, I wonder if they know why they fight," said Alcibiade pensively. "It will

make a difference." One may not suppose that Matthieu-Marc, or even Alcibiade, always ready to talk of what they believed, understood the profundities of the English heart. But they knew the temper of conquering armies, and even Alcibiade whistled a mournful lay as he drew the guy ropes fast.

There were others jovial enough. The officers of Audley's Horse knew no care. Their credit was good yet from the sack of Marlborough, and the ship gave them all they needed. Being the forenoon, it was no more than a gallon of spiced wine and a bowl of ale with toasted crabs swimming in it. Cornet Sackville and Captain Sedley and Captain Godfrey, three lads of little beard but with faces stained already and voices going husky, were pleased to pipe up:

We be soldiers three—

*Pardona moy, je vous an prie*

Lately come forth o' the low country

With never a penny of money.

Fa la la la lantido dilly.

And the others broke off their game of hazard to beat time with the pewter:

Here, good fellow, I drink to thee—

*Pardona moy, je vous an prie*

To all good fellows wherever they be,

With never a penny of money.

Fa la la la lantido dilly.



To which came with an explosive entry Major Dick Stewart. He flung his hat down on the dice and himself into a chair that creaked. "Perdition, lads! Ods fire! Damnation!" and he drank off a pint of the wine.

"Speak for yourself, Major," piped Cornet Sackville.

"Ods blood, if I do not speak for you all, you be no men but so many sheep's kidneys. O split me that I should live to see it! A sour, stiff-backed, swell-head jack pudding from Germany to command us—*us*! O burn me, 'tis enough to make old Sam Audley ride back on a gridiron to card him!"

The rest had no mind to cool his wrath. "*Viejo diablo*," says Captain Sedley, who had a rarefied taste in oaths, "would the King have us learn the high Dutch?"

"Nay; the calf is English born. A Jeremiah Stow."

"Jeremiah Under-the-Fifth-Rib Smite-and-Spare-Not Barebones! Zounds! he should be with Mandevil and Noll Cromwell. The name is an insult to the regiment."

"Insult, quotha!" Major Dick Stewart made away with another pint. "Ods bones, 'tis a vile outrage, and the lad that doth not resent it is a white-livered prigster. Are we rats that the Palatine should foist a broken bully from Germany on us? Was there no gentleman in the regiment good enough to be its

colonel? Od rot me, lads, we'll roast this white cuckoo roundly!"

"Hoo! Hoo!" roared Captain Godfrey in the manner of one cheering on dogs to bait a bear.

The door was opened. Grave and entirely calm, Colonel Stow gazed upon these flushed, agitated gentlemen.

"Who are you, milk face?" cried Major Stewart.

"You are the gentlemen of Audley's Horse?" said Colonel Stow, and on the answering shout saluted. "I have the pleasure to be your colonel."

Major Stewart put his elbow into the ribs of Captain Godfrey, who did the like for Cornet Sackville. The gentlemen of Audley's Horse began to laugh at Colonel Stow, and laughed in volleys.

Colonel Stow leaned against the door-post, caressed his beard and smiled upon them kindly. "I fear," said he in the first lull, "I fear I shall want new officers in my regiment." He looked them over with plain contempt which was multiplied as his eye rested on the purple amplitude of Major Dick Stewart. "Major," says he in a calm small voice, "you have rested so long in the tavern that the regiment has forgot what you look like. Go and show them."

Major Dick Stewart flung himself back in his chair, dashed his spurred heels into the floor and was understood to bid his colonel seek perdition.

Colonel Stow laughed. "If I do not obey you I am a Christian," said he. "But," and the tone hard-

ened, "if you do not obey me you are broke. Get to your duty." The major glared and his neck swelled. He seemed to desire to swear. Colonel Stow continued to regard him with a perfect calm. He heaved himself out of his chair and stood over Colonel Stow. "Make me a return of the damaged pistol locks by sundown," said Colonel Stow and turned from him with contempt. Major Stewart plunged out.

The rest of them were whispering together. Colonel Stow, preserving always the extreme of quiet in his manner, walked to the table, picked a pipe with care, filled it from his own silver box, and lit it and composed himself comfortably in Major Stewart's chair. Then the little Cornet Sackville did the like himself, with a comical affectation of Colonel Stow's manner, and concluded by arranging himself in a chair precisely opposite Colonel Stow, whom he ogled. The rest ranged themselves in a half circle and stared at the colonel as if he were a show.

"*Tétedieu*," says Captain Sedley, "the colonel has very large feet."

"But how sweet a nose," said Cornet Sackville affectionately.

"And what long ears," cried Captain Godfrey.

Colonel Stow smoked on, silent and calm.

"*Madonna*," quoth Captain Sedley, "he is quite tame, our colonel."

"Blessed are the meek," said Cornet Sackville with unction.

"Had they no use for cowards in Germany, Colonel?" inquired Captain Godfrey.

Colonel Stow continued to smoke. He dropped his words lazily between puffs. "It is very natural you should all desire the honor of crossing swords with me. But I have no reason to think you deserve it. I shall concede you a chance. Which gentleman bears himself most soldierly in the next fight I shall permit to try my sword play. You, sirrah,"—he singled out Captain Godfrey,—“go make my compliments to Prince Rupert and assure him in my name I'll have the regiment in hand by to-morrow.” Captain Godfrey gaped at him, turned for inspiration to his comrades, who had none, and shambled out.

The others, on whom gloom was plainly descending, muttered together again. "Sir," says Captain Sedley, with an aggrieved air, "sir, we would have you know we are gentlemen and will be treated for such."

"You shall be till you make it impossible," said Colonel Stow and finished his pipe . . . Then he rose. "Well, gentlemen, you will understand me in time. I understand you now, which is the chief matter. The regiment parades at five."

Then he went back to his regiment and mingled with the troopers, who found him a new kind of

officer. He treated them as men. He was concerned for their fortunes. He desired to listen to their grumbles of rations and pay and was not fool enough to believe all they said. Such a colonel was vastly impressive to the soldiers of the army of the King.

They turned out on parade with a smartness that disgusted their officers. Then Colonel Stow made an oration. "You know nothing of me, gentlemen. I have fought fourteen campaigns and borne my own regiment through six. It is my habit to see that my regiment fares as well as the best and deserves it." Whereafter, till sundown, he put them through a drill the like of which they had never known. It was the opinion of the troopers, when, sweating and stiff, they came back to water their horses, that their colonel was a tough fellow. But their colonel thought less of them.

In days that followed Colonel Stow taught them tribulation. They were schooled as never soldiers of the King had been schooled before, and they did not affect to enjoy it. But to their surprise it bred in them a queer surly affection for him. Indeed, if he harried them it was plainly for their good, and for their good he harried others, too. My Lord Percy, who was master of the victualling as well as the ordnance, did not hide his disgust with a colonel who expected something of him and got it. Before a week was out, Sir James Griffin, the paymaster, found himself recalling the parable of the impor-



tunate widow. And Sir James was a man of religion.

The officers of Colonel Stow approved these proceedings in no particular. They condemned him for an ungentlemanly frowardness. A fellow thus troubled by the base concerns of common troopers was plainly of low blood. But they found it extraordinarily difficult to convince Colonel Stow of his inferiority. Attempts to make him ridiculous recoiled like an ill-backed petard with general disaster. The fascinating dream of common mutiny was shattered for ever by Prince Rupert's jovial confidence to Captain Godfrey that the man who made trouble for Colonel Stow could count on an enemy. The courtiers might mock at the Palatine, but no man in the army invited his anger till there were twenty leagues between them. Brave souls like my Lord Goring might dare it then. So Colonel Stow's officers were sulkily submissive—an air which became them mighty ill. Such of them as were sportsmen, and had some feeling for their trade, saw the regiment quicken under his hand and were aggrieved with themselves for being pleased.

What Colonel Stow thought of his regiment and his army he kept to himself. For it was as strange an army as king ever used to vindicate his majesty. There were indeed those in it who believed in him passionately as in their God: there were those less devout who yet counted all well lost for him: there were more who felt their own lordship over the

common herd linked indissolubly with his kingship and who fought for him keenly as for themselves. But these all told made but few and the mass of that army cared no more for King than for Puritan and knew less of war than the morris dance. They were soldiers neither from a fierce zeal nor by trade. They were the loungers at bull baitings, the idlers and broken men of village and town, who ran to war as they would have run to a street brawl. Never an army knew less of its business, and its general, the Palatine, was not the man to make good soldiers out of sots and fools. Nor had he the chance. He must needs fret the best of his strength away in fighting the good gentlemen of the council who conceived themselves statesmen and generals by divine inspiration, and, having but little matter of state left them to occupy with, took hold of strategy and the government of war. Not first of generals nor last, Rupert found his most troublesome foes of his own party, and he had not the temper to wear them out.

If Rupert had a plan of campaign, my Lord Digby was instant to the King with another. The King spoke both fairly and thwarted both. That was the royal conception of majesty—to trust no man and to hold himself secret from every man. He moved in a mysterious way, because it was his divine right, and certainly he performed wonders. Inasmuch as he was a monarch and God's proxy, he could not commit his sacred designs to men nor

tell them the truth. Double-faced through good and ill, he lamented continually the harshness of his friends and solemnly likened his foes to them that slew the Christ.

With such a bloody method and behavior  
Their ancestors did crucify our Saviour!

So he wrote in a poem that would be blasphemous if it were not too stupid. It was ill fighting for a King who could not conceive that any man had the right to require honesty of him.

"By God, sir," cried Rupert once in a blaze of passion, "the chief traitor to King Charles is King Charles himself." Outwardly that was forgiven, but the King did not suffer himself to forget. Never afterward could he believe Rupert loyal. He solemnly added another to the list of woes which he kept with zealous precision: played the kindly uncle to Rupert and believed no word he said. It may not have been the wise way for a king to deal with his general, but King Charles was above human wisdom.

This quarrel came when the King, swayed by the sapience of my Lord Digby, was pleased to consider he had army enough. Rupert desired to enroll new regiments of foot. My Lord Digby, who grudged everything that gave the Palatine power, persuaded the King that if the army could not sweep the Puritans away it was the fault of its general and that the money for the new regiments were bet-

ter spent on diplomacy; in fact, that it was a derogation from the divine majesty to believe a larger army needed. The King saw in this queer notion a subtlety and it captivated him as usual.

So you find Colonel Royston with a commission to form a regiment, instructed that no regiment was to be formed. In a cold rage he went off to Rupert. He would have forced a quarrel, he says, if he could, but with the first sneer Rupert himself broke out: "Thunder of God, man, swear at me and have done! I swear at myself that I am fool enough to stay here. If you have any honor, lose it; if you have any loyalty break it, and by hell, you shall live the happier." He drank heavily from the flagon at his elbow. When the King played him false he was apt to fly to wine. He pushed a bottle across the table to Royston, and the two of them in the worst temper with all the world got vastly drunk together.

You conceive Royston in a sorry state the next day. The gloom of things he beheld in aching discomfort twice as black. It was obvious in his aspect. He was not inclined to take meekly Colonel Stow's shake of the head and small reproving smile. "A fine lusty fool you have made of me, Jerry," he growled and called defiantly for a tankard of dog's nose.

Colonel Stow shrugged. "Wine is a mocker," he remarked.

"And what a murrain have I to do but drink?" cried Royston.

Colonel Stow opened his eyes and said something about a regiment.

Royston swore profusely at the world. "Regiment! I have no regiment and shall have none. By Heaven, I was a fool to follow you. I might have known you would feather your nest and I should go howling. What else have I ever had by you?"

Colonel Stow was grave. "It may be so, George," he said at last with something like a sigh. "I did not think to have heard you say it."

Royston gave an ugly laugh and drank again. Then he put down the tankard with a bang. "Bah, I am a churl, Jerry. And the Palatine has a better head for liquor than I. But my temper is broke, I think. Faith, there is some reason for a man that has been diddled like me." And he told how the King had forbidden the raising of one regiment more.

Colonel Stow cursed his King for a fool. Then he looked wistfully at his friend. "I wish to God you had my place, George."

"O, have done with that!" cried Royston impatiently. "But, i'gad, Jerry, I'll wager we are come to the wrong side."

"I'll not believe that," said Colonel Stow. "There are men worth making here. But faith, George, if you wish yourself out of it, I can scarce bid you stay, now. . . . Will you go?"

Royston hesitated some while. And often after-



ward, as he hints, wished that he had taken the occasion and given his friend a good-by. But, "I'll see it out," he growled and he gave a queer laugh of contempt.

Colonel Stow gripped at his hand with glad enthusiasm. "Faith, you were made for a friend, George," says he in a low voice.

Royston laughed again. He despised himself on many counts. It was a foolishness to stay where neither money was to be won nor name. It was a foolishness to be governed by friendship. It was worst foolishness of all that friendship should be mingled with what mocked it, a shameful care for the woman of his friend's love. Lucinda, who was surely very sorry for it at the last, had power with Colonel Royston and he despised himself and stayed—strange company for those gentlemen volunteers, who, splendid, undisciplined and useless as brave, filled up the army of the King.

The gentlemen volunteers had no doubt of the issue of the war. It was as certain that the King would conquer as that neither horse nor foot could stand up for their charge. They looked for utter victory and the stamping out of Puritans and the rule absolute of their divine King. There was a fair array in Oxford of some such faith as this. Even Rupert had still in his sanest hours a vast confidence in himself. The rout at Marston had hurt his pride and taught him the grip of fear. But if he was soured by it, he was soon his own master again. He

bore his work hard and the politicians fretted him into black hours, but he could not long together doubt himself an unconquerable artist in war. He and his friends all counted on triumph and did earnestly desire it. The politicians, my Lord Digby, Mr. Hyde and the rest, quarreling with him on all else, were agreed in this. The unhindered rule of the King, no less, was their goal, and if some of them seemed to march to it by strange ways they were entirely sure of attaining. But the most of them, the great mass of the army, knew no such flaming faith. They fought because it was the game, and when the game was no more amusing would give it up light of heart. Whether King ruled or Puritan troubled them little. England would be a fat pleasant country still.

There were some, too, not the least wise, not the least honest, who, while they fought against the Puritan, feared the triumph of the King. Men who loved England and sane life better than any passionate creed, they saw no end to the war in the victory of either army, no future for England under either sway. It is not always the men of low spirit who rank with the Laodiceans.

When he walked the meadows at dawn one day Colonel Stow saw a gentleman of a disorderly dress and a bent back who went uncomfortably. His black hair was all unkempt, his face of an unwholesome darkness. He knit his hands behind him strenuously and talked to himself. The matter of his discourse

was but one word. In a shrill and sad accent he ingeminated—"Peace! Peace!"

Colonel Stow passed him and saw the melancholy of his eyes. It was my Lord Falkland, the secretary of state. Colonel Stow watched him a while and went away thoughtful.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### MY LORD DIGBY UPON WOMAN

“HARRY, you are a fool,” says my Lord Digby in a didactic manner.

“Bah, I amuse myself,” quoth my Lord Jermyn, and flicked his ruffles.

“Precisely,” said my Lord Digby.

They were of the gay company in the Broad Walk where the elms were newly bright and the wood pigeons murmurous. My Lord Jermyn had just been displaying himself with Lucinda, beside whose lithe grace, it is to be confessed, he was comically brief. Lucinda was remarkable in a gown of summer green and she wore it worthily.

“Woman,” says my Lord Digby with his wise air, “woman, if she is only amusing, is not even that. She is not worth playing with unless she is too dangerous for play. You play with all, Harry, which means that all play with you.”

“You are like a rattle,” said my Lord Jermyn frankly. “That good girl—who, thank Heaven, is neither good nor much a girl—is like a hogshead of Spanish wine. I like to taste her, but I’ve no

mind to take the whole of her. O, we understand each other."

"My dear Harry, you never understood a woman yet. It is why you have such success with them. Madame Lucinda is a bigger soul than you. She has passions." (My Lord Jermyn chuckled profanely.) "If you were a man with red blood I might be sorry for you. She believes in herself. It is the last worst fault in woman. But she will give a man or two magnificent moments." He contemplated my Lord Jermyn benignly. "Harry, I should like to see you in a tragedy. You would be amusing."

"You could never be that, George," said my Lord Jermyn with a yawn of candor.

But my Lord Digby was born for the didactic. "She is a woman of the grand order. She'll use her strength. She needs all men to be her slaves, and knows not to deny herself. A woman worth dying for—if you are of that temper. She is not for you, Harry. You would give her little sport. But she is real—real. *Non equidem invideo. Miror magis.* I adore her, but I have no use for her, and pray Heaven she hath none for me. I find mine own occasion in one of your shy maids who scarce knows what womanhood is for—one whose glory is to spend herself in a man's service, not a man in hers—some sweet, virtuous fool. I was never a tragedian, Harry."

"You have words in you, not blood, George," said



my Lord Jermyn, who honestly conceived himself a creature of romance.

It was growing late for the meadows. Who felt themselves the models of the court had made for the town already, and Lucinda was going, too, with Colonel Stow at her side. You may guess what brought Colonel Royston to mingle with that array of courtiers. Lucinda had taught him weakness. He would not go seek her out. What a pox was she to him? But he would walk where she might be seen. Why the fiend should he run away from a woman? When he saw her swaying on Colonel Stow's arm, he did not deign to see her. But he heard the ring of her laugh, and when she beckoned he thrust through to her side.

"You make yourself a stranger, sir. Or is it an enemy?" she cried, with sparkling eyes.

"It is an indifferent, madame," said Colonel Royston.

"And that is a challenge. Nay, but first I challenge you. Doubtless you have wished your friend joy of me. Pray, give me joy of your friend." It was her first confession of surrender.

Colonel Royston bowed. "Do you doubt your joy, madame, or his?"

She looked at Colonel Stow, and they laughed together. "Nay, we know," she said. Then, clinging to Colonel Stow's arm in a dainty poise, she turned to Royston. "But, indeed, sir, we would have you glad with us."

"You are marvelous kind," said Colonel Royston. His color was high, and he would not look in her eyes.

"I'faith, we are greatly happy," she murmured, and, drawing close, looked up at Colonel Stow with a strange, tender smile. Then she gave some of the kindness of it to Colonel Royston. "I want you to know," she said simply.

Royston bowed again. His lower lip was drawn in.

"In truth, George should share of the best we have," said Colonel Stow.

"There is much," said Lucinda in a low voice.

Colonel Royston, looking up, saw their eyes meet again, saw her hand linked close and pressing his friend's.

She turned quickly. "Some day," there was a laugh in her voice, "some day, sir, mayhap you will know."

"Oh, you expect too much of me," cried Royston sharply.

At the strange tone she seemed to start and draw against Colonel Stow, and, so swaying with him step for step, looked full at Royston. "Nay, I think I know you," she said softly.

"If you do," cried Royston, "you know why I leave you now." And he plunged away down Merton Street.

Lucinda looked surprised at Colonel Stow, who laughed. "Nay, dear, I think we be too much lovers for George, who is not in that way."

"Is it so indeed?" said Lucinda innocently, and was very kind to Colonel Stow thereafter.

Five and twenty miles away in the old guild house at Aylesbury, where the wounded Puritan soldiers made hospital, one of their nurses knelt by her bedside, praying. With a work that left her scant time to think of herself or days to come, Joan Normandy felt life easier. Still there were hours when a lonely fear possessed her, and she found no help but in prayer. It was not much for herself. She had no right to ask of God an easy life. If she could not be happy in her lot, the fault was her own, and she must cure herself. She prayed for him, her wonderful hero of the springtime. Colonel Stow never knew how magnificent he was to one woman. His gaiety and the ease of his strength fascinated. Even when she trembled for his scorn of the laws she worshipped, there was a strange glamour about him. He was clothed with the glory of a maid's first dream of man. In the tiny bare attic she knelt all white by her bed, and gave herself to a pure yearning for him, as a mother yearns over her child. She had no thought nor hope to see him again in life, but with all the power of her being she prayed for him, she pleaded with God in tears and trembling that he might be safe and given a good happiness. It was of her faith that one soul given utterly to striving for another's good might prevail with God. She tried.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### NEWBURY VALE

“**B**EFORE this business be done, we shall be the longest-winded army in England,” wrote Sir William Waller to his masters, the Parliament. He was maneuvering across the middle west with an army of infantry against the King’s horsemen. He complains, moreover, that when he rebuked his men they sang to him, and the strain was this, a low song:

Home! Home! We would be home!  
Ha’ done with your thorough,  
Flite ye the morrow,  
We’ll drive our furrow  
Home! Home!

The hint was broad. “An army compounded of these men will never go through with your service,” Sir William Waller protested. But all the while the men who had overthrown Rupert on Long Marston Moor, the Ironside cavalry, were drawing slowly south. They suffered from only one disease—their general, my Lord Manchester. His lieutenant general, a Mr. Cromwell of Huntingdon, mentioned it.

While Waller was amid these pathetic difficulties, and my Lord Manchester in no hurry to help him, the King was fighting my Lord Essex in a comical campaign that made Rupert swear but did little else good or ill.

It served Colonel Stow, however. His regiment, exercised daily in tactic, not tried too soon by the stern shock of a stricken field, grew ready and quick. He began to be proud of it, and the men, who found he never risked them idly and always had a care for them, approved him mightily. Even his officers were learning. All went well. But he discovered with surprise that half England cared nothing for the war. The country folk had an impartial disgust for Cavalier and Puritan. The Cavalier fed on them without paying, the Puritan cut down the May-pole and stopped the morris dance. How should they care for either victory? What hope for them in the rule of plunderer or the rule of killjoy? Colonel Stow, watching, understanding—it was the best part of his mind that he understood unlike men—asked himself sometimes what he had to make in it all. But he seemed to see clear. With such fair-weather armies—he had not met the Iron-side cavalry—the war must drag out long, and in a long war men who knew their trade would come to power. He saw himself a conqueror among the conquerors, a master in England and Englishmen glad of him.

In fine, he esteemed himself still highly. It was



a state necessary to his happiness. Lucinda had long letters of joy. Do not doubt that she was happy, too. I think she believed in him always.

The wind of Waller's army held out. My Lord Manchester, "sweet, meek man," stayed his hand from breaking the head of his lieutenant general, and joined them at Reading before Rupert and the King could eat them up. There was marching and counter-marching in the vale of Kennet, and at last, under the wooded hills that sheltered Newbury, the outposts met, and the Puritan troopers flung themselves from the saddle and knelt to thank God for the sight. There was no doubt of battle. Cromwell was there, and Rupert.

Where Speen Hill rises above the meeting rivers Rupert chose the ground, and through an autumn day the King's infantry scarred the hill's wealth of timber with a breastwork. Below, in the wooded angle between the clear waters of Lambourne and Kennet, musketeers lined the hedge-rows, and in the open meadows under the guns of Donnington castle the horsemen awaited their chance. It was a position folly could hardly weaken. Colonel Royston, riding along the front with his friend, allowed himself to admire. "If they have any gentleman that is fool enough to fight, he will break his nose here, Jerry," said he.

"There is Cromwell, whom the Palatine calls Ironside," said Colonel Stow. "They say he is very hot in the charge. I'gad, I need some faith to be-

lieve it, for when I knew him in Stoke he was half a natural by reason of too much religion."

Colonel Royston laughed. "Jerry, my dear, pray for a few fanatics. None else will dare come at you."

But Colonel Stow was something pensive. "'Tis a footman's battle, I fear. I find no space for a shock. These hedge-rows are mighty neat for your musketeers, but 'tis no gentlemanly way of fighting. Gustavus for me, and a brigade at speed."

Colonel Royston shook his head. "A wasteful tactic, Jerry. Give me Scotch musketeers and Swedish pikes, and I'll break the best charge you bring. It's an archaic beast, your horseman. The world is the footman's now."

"Alack for a dull gray world," sighed Colonel Stow.

"Faith, you are born out of time, Jerry. You should have ridden with Monsieur Amadis of Gaul, or the late Lancelot of the Lake. You like your fights romantic. I only want to win."

Colonel Stow laughed. "Ah, I want much more than that."

Royston looked at him queerly. "Yes, you want too much, you and she."

They parted soon, and in silence, and Colonel Stow came back to his quarters at Donnington, shadowed with solemnity.

Major Dick Stewart was awaiting him, more flamboyant than for many a day. "Aha, Colonel,"

says he, with a knowing grin at Colonel Stow's grave face, "you apprehend a battle, eh?"

"Nay," said Colonel Stow sweetly, "my apprehension is there may be none."

"Ay, you burn for one, indeed."

Colonel Stow opened his eyes. "I had hoped you had learned your position, Major," he said sadly.

"And I thought you would forget your promise, ods bones!" cried the major in triumph.

"Oh." Colonel Stow understood. "I am engaged to cross swords with the gentleman of the regiment who does most gallantly. But indeed, Major, I never hoped for the pleasure of meeting you."

Major Stewart snarled.

"I wonder you think this manner worth while," said Colonel Stow pensively. "It does not amuse me, and appears painful to yourself."

"Zounds, sir," cried the major, "we shall see if you can jeer to-morrow."

"I warn you, 'tis in battle I am most satiric," said Colonel Stow.

The major flung away from him, muttering.

On the next day, when dawn broke dull red, the King's men saw a brigade counter-marching round the base of the hills by Winterbourn to take them in the rear. At the same time there was a feint upon the front by some horsemen, who got nothing but a rough handling for their pains. The growing light showed hill and valley alive with men. It was a strange, checkered array, more like a dozen armies

than two, for countless colors and fashions and strange panoplies broke the dull peace of meadow and hedge-row. Trooper and footman of those notable Ironside regiments of the Eastern Counties were indeed alike in tawny red. Rupert's horsemen had no color save blue and steel. But the rest of the army was any color, and all colors—orange and green and white, violet and gray, as it were a masquerade on the hills. Only my Lord Manchester had made his men wear green boughs in their morions, so that they marched like a copse at war.

The matches were blazing along the hedge-rows. The musketeers filled their mouths with bullets and felt the powder cases in their rattling bandoleers. Already the Puritan pikemen were closing upon Speen Hill. The quarter cannon and sakers behind the breastwork there began to fire, and played hard, and, quoth Sir William Waller, "they made the ground mighty hot." But though their ranks were rent, the pikemen worked on steadily, and when it came to push of steel the musketeers had no hope to stand against them, but ran from hedge to hedge. Slowly the green boughs won to the foot of the hill, and Skippon, the sergeant major general, who knew his trade, halted them there a while, though the cannon were fierce upon them. Then he raised the shout, "The sword of the Lord!" and sprang forward up the hill. By the breastwork there was a long, stern fight. They had no room for skilled tactic, or the power of massed numbers; it was man

for man, and the victory to the stronger, stubborn men. The King's men had courage. There was no question of that in the wildest, riotous regiment. But it needed more than courage and a sportsman's joy of a fight to hold out till dark, thrusting and bearing the thrust of the eighteen-foot pikes. While the sun was still high, the breastwork was won, and the Puritans came over it, singing a psalm:

Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place  
In generations all,  
Before Thou ever hadst brought forth  
The mountains, great or small.

They "clapped their hats on the touch-holes of the guns to claim them for their own," halted to form again, and charged on down the hill after the King's men. But there was to be no easy victory. As soon as they were off the hillside the hedge-rows rattled musketry, and their front was smitten away. Still they had the heart to force advance, but it was difficult and slow, and the night near.

Down in the vale Rupert's horsemen faced Cromwell. This way and that they moved through the meadows, each seeking his chance to take the other at advantage. Most of Rupert's men were cursing the tactic and delay, and around Colonel Stow his officers babbled of white-livered, water-blood Roundheads. Colonel Stow laughed. "There's a soldier commands there, gentlemen," he said, nod-



ding to the green boughs of the Puritan troopers. "A man who knows when not to fight."

"Your own kind of courage, Colonel," Major Stewart sneered.

"Yes, sir," said Colonel Stow, eying him serenely, "for I know how to fight. . . . Oh, zounds, the fool!"

It was a tribute to my Lord Cleveland. My Lord Cleveland suffered from the ability to believe himself a leader of cavalry. He had chosen to fling his regiment at Cromwell, and the lieutenant general, who desired nothing better, split his brigade in two and let a half fall on either flank of my Lord Cleveland's unhappy men. They had been utterly overwhelmed but for Colonel Stow, who swung his regiment round and made as if he would take the Puritans in rear. They faced about to meet him, their trap was spoiled, and my Lord Cleveland's men straggled back in disorder. But their colonel had gone down in the charge, and their standard of a lion with a beagle baying at him was gone to swell the Puritan trophies. Colonel Stow drew off. There had been no more than some snapping of pistols between the front ranks.

There was naught to be won of a charge, and soon either side fell back. Twilight was darkening. "Rot me!" growled Major Stewart, "one runs no risks in this regiment. Od burn me, not one poor charge!"

Colonel Stow was looking at the standardless,

shattered ranks of my Lord Cleveland. "Nay, we'll not lose our honor," said he.

Major Stewart laughed. "I thought we had."

"You are perhaps a poor judge of honor, Major," said Colonel Stow sweetly.

The major snarled. "Well, Colonel," says he, with a scornful truculence, "and since you are so honorable to-night, whom do you name to fight you—which is the happy man?"

"How can I tell?" said Colonel Stow.

"I'gad, I thought as much. Nay, we'll not be bubbled so. Which did most gallantly, you said."

"And that is for you gentlemen to say," said Colonel Stow sweetly.

"Ods fire, with you in command, no gentleman has a chance to be gallant."

"You see none?" Colonel Stow inquired with some interest, and when Major Stewart denied it with oaths he laughed.

"Why, sir, do you mean to slide out of your promise?" cried the major.

"You shall confess I have kept it," said Colonel Stow.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### MISTRESS NORMANDY SEES A FRIEND

PRINCE RUPERT knew and Cromwell knew that those stubborn Puritan pikemen who won Speen Hill had decided the issue of the day. Cromwell and Rupert both looked often anxious to the main body of the Parliament army about Newbury, where my Lord Manchester had command. If Manchester would but hurl his brigades on the King's infantry, they could be taken in front and rear and trampled to powder. With fierce messages Cromwell's orderlies sped to my Lord Manchester again and again. But my Lord Manchester, that "sweet, meek man," would not be so harsh as to defeat his foe. Twilight fell on a half-fought fight.

Prince Rupert, unlike my Lord Manchester, could make up his mind. He saw swiftly that the weak position left him was not to be held, and swiftly came his orders for retreat. The gentleman who brought them to Colonel Stow's regiment could not find Colonel Stow, and Major Stewart swore by his honor and much else that the white cuckoo had deserted.

If he had seen the going of Colonel Stow he would

have been more sure of it. Colonel Stow was possessed with an idea that pleased him, and it took him a strange course. "The best of a soldier that I have known," Colonel Royston calls him, "and always of a great sanity," and Royston, though a friend, was no fool. But Colonel Stow lived a soldier of dreams. There were hours when he must fling sane duty away and ride with romance. A deed of wild splendor could allure the man whose nature would not let him waste a troop in rashness. He loved, doubtless—as in a rare sneer at his friend Colonel Royston hints somewhere—he loved to conceive himself decorated with a knight errant's glory. He was a subject of vanity. But chiefly he desired this wild work for the throb of it, the instant peril of all. That made for him the best of life.

So you see him in the twilight, with a Puritan's green bough in his hat, and a Puritan's red cloak about him, working craftily round to the rear of Cromwell's troopers. They were dismounted and loosening girths, and making ready to bivouac. Colonel Stow came through them at an easy pace, whistling the tune *Martyrdom*.

"Whence, brother? And with what fortune?" cried a swart troop sergeant.

"Praise the Lord!" Colonel Stow exhorted him. "From Sir William Waller, to whom the Lord hath been very gracious. What fortune with you?"

The troop sergeant groaned in spirit. "The Lord hath not suffered us to do an execution. We are

miserable sinners and unworthy. We have gone to and fro in the earth, and walked up and down in it, yet we have accomplished nothing save some small overthrow of one regiment of the men of Belial, from whom we took their colonel and their standard."

"A standard!" cried Colonel Stow in righteous ecstasy. "Nay, but you jest."

The sergeant groaned. "What have I to do with jesting? I am a vessel of wrath."

Colonel Stow asked pardon for mistaking him. "Whose was this standard, then?"

"Man, what do I know? We fight not for such gauds. 'Tis sent to the man Henry Montagu, whom the children of this world call Earl of Manchester."

"And the children of God call fool," said Colonel Stow, and won a sour smile from the sergeant, and rode on. The affair prospered excellently.

The darkness was falling swift, and the fires made black shadows that Colonel Stow used well. Himself scarce seen, he watched the gathering crowds and their bearing, and caught scraps of talk. They fascinated him, these soldiers who could not joke. He saw them through the lurid, smoky light, belts loosed, corselets unlaced, but with no joy in their ease. They crowded round the soup pots to argue whether the Lord was displeased with them for forwardness, or my Lord Manchester, like Saul who slew not Agag. He caught the strong accent of his own Buckinghamshire, and checked a moment to



hear Ingoldsby's regiment holding a prayer-meeting till their pots boiled. They were doubtless ludicrous, but that was not what troubled Colonel Stow. They were too much in earnest to be pleasant enemies. He liked a little humor upon the other side.

Again and again a patrol challenged him for his errand and was satisfied to hear that he came from Sir William Waller. Colonel Stow always made one lie take him as far as it would. His first danger came as he drew upon the houses of Newbury town. He heard the ring of his own voice before him and had almost ridden against his brother. There was a party of Puritan officers too much concerned in their own debate to mark Colonel Stow's sudden break of pace behind them. Colonel Stow heard that his brother was displeased with the world and my Lord Manchester. The sentiment appeared general.

Newbury town was noisily alive. The streets throbbed with chatter and argument. Soldier and citizen wrangled vehemently in biblical phrase on the fortune of the day and the morrow, and Colonel Stow had no difficulty in avoiding attention. He learned easily that my Lord Manchester's quarters were at the Sun and saw with a glad relief his brother turn into the courtyard of the Blue Bear.

The market-place was half light with the glare of lanterns and torches and by the door of the borough hall, made hospital for the hour's need, grave browed nurses stood waiting for the first convoy

of wounded. There was one who as Colonel Stow turned from the bridge and rode into the light gave a strange choked cry of alarm and caught her breast. "It is nothing, it is nothing," she gasped as the others turned to her. "A tiny shooting pain. It is gone. It is past." She was Joan Normandy. Colonel Stow heard her cry and the murmuring voice and was most careful not to see her. But the heart in him beat queerly. Some tone in that cry troubled him. And Joan Normandy thanked God that he had not heard and gazed after him wide-eyed and white, trembling. He frightened her with a wild hope. He wore the Puritan tokens, the Puritan colors; and still she dared not let herself believe that he had given himself to her faith. That were too great a joy. But he was near, he was near, and her blood surged quick and she strained after him.

Colonel Stow, brazen enough, rode up to the door of the Sun, my Lord Manchester's inn, dismounted and gave his horse in charge to one of the lads of the town who gaped about the doorway. A moment he stood and with swift eye considered the position. My Lord Manchester had no more guard than a single sentry at his door. The market-place had a hundred tiny crowds of soldier and citizen all chattering together, but there was not so much as a sergeant's guard under arms. It promised well. Colonel Stow turned by the broad gateway to the Sun.

He approached the sentry with a flattering air

of confidence. "Hark ye, brother, where will I find the captain of the guard?"

The sentry permitted himself to grin. "Do 'e want your head bit off?"

"Nay," said Colonel Stow, "I have an unreasonable kindness for it."

"Then keep yourself away from Captain Billy Vaughan," said the sentry.

Colonel Stow scratched his nose. "There is doubtless some one more amiable?" he suggested.

"And if so be there be," said the sentry, looking excessively wise, "why should I tell you?" Colonel Stow put his hand in his pocket. The sentry grinned more broadly. Colonel Stow was relieved to find some one corruptible in this righteous army. A shilling passed. "Do 'e ax for Sergeant Bob Willey. He'll not be far from the tap."

Colonel Stow proceeded, following the smell of liquor. Not indeed in the tap, lest discipline should be shamed, but within easy reach of it he found a red round man with a sergeant's orange scarf on his buff coat. "Sergeant Willey?" quoth he and the round man wheezed. "May I speak with you?"

"Surely," said Sergeant Willey.

"Shall we crack a quart first?"

"Surely," said Sergeant Willey and grinned. "If you pay for it."

Colonel Stow remarked to himself that my Lord Manchester's quarters had a different atmosphere from the rest of the army. He drew Sergeant Wil-

ley away to a corner and they buried their noses in tankards of the oldest October. Then, "'Tis a little affair of my own," says Colonel Stow mysteriously. "I am a trooper of Ireton's and when the malignants charged us to-day I had the luck to win one of their standards by a thrust in the short ribs. Well, the standard, my quartermaster saith, he sent to my lord here. But I have found a low fellow of Cromwell's regiment swears there was but one taken to-day and he took it. Prithee, tell me, that I may call him liar, what have you here."

"There is but one brought in, my bully. A thing of a red lion with a yellow dog that yelps at him."

"'Tis the true likeness of mine!" cried Colonel Stow, in an ingenuous rage. "Verily, I will chastise that vain boaster with whips and with scorpions. Prithee, sir, help me to a sight of this that I may know it and be sure. I would not lightly make strife in the army of the Lord."

"O, faith, if you are for swingeing one of Noll Cromwell's varlets none of my lord's men will balk you. I'll help you to the rag, my bully. Follow on, and good luck to your quarrel, follow on."

He led the way up to a disorderly guard-room where half a dozen troopers lolled and snored and drank. He took from a corner the tattered standard and shook it out carelessly. It was stiff with blood. "There is the ugly rag," said he with a sneer of a laugh at it and flung it down on the floor. Colonel Stow's eyes flashed. The soul of

Sergeant Willey annoyed him. "Is that yours, my buck?" quoth Sergeant Willey and stirred the blood stained folds with his foot.

Colonel Stow picked it up with a gentle care and spread it wider, drawing back with that pretence to the door. "Yes, it is mine," he said gravely, and on the word smote Sergeant Willey down with the staff and darted out, slamming the door. He took the stairs in a leap, he rushed across the courtyard. Shouts arose behind him and the heavy thud of the troopers. "Halt there! Seize him! Seize him! A malignant! Seize him!" And under the gateway a man did seize him. Colonel Stow found himself gazing close into a red fleshy face from which gray eyes flashed pale. It was Cromwell himself. Colonel Stow put the staff of the standard between General Cromwell's legs and flinging himself forward, upset General Cromwell and broke away. The sentry drove a pike at him and he slipped beneath the thrust and leaped to his saddle. Men ran to snatch at his bridle, but he drove in his spurs and the horse bounded forward, hurling them down. One of Cromwell's escort had time to rein round in his path, but the staff of the standard emptied the saddle like a lance and Colonel Stow crashed across the market while the little crowds of chatters fled out of his way. He stood up in his stirrups. "For the King!" he shouted. "For the King!" and so sped away from the half light of the marketplace into the gloom.



There was one who watched him go with a wild gleam in her eyes; her bosom surged high and her cheeks were hot. She was alive with a strange joy. She was keenly, fiercely glad of his deed and proud. She throbbed with mad life. He was her hero of the springtime, and none like him among men. He dared, and, gay and splendid, he conquered the impossible. It was good, it was good to give her heart to him. . . . Not then nor for many an hour did she think to weep that his deeds were for her foes, that he was pledged still to another faith, another love. . . . He was fearless and strong and great. . . . While she toiled that night through to ease the pain of the wounded, her soul was singing a strange melody. . . .

Colonel Stow was heartily anxious as he broke away through the dark streets. He could hear Cromwell's troopers behind him and he did not know the town. Only he meant to get out of it on the side remote from the armies. By the turn of the road to Hungerford two of the Puritans caught him up and he heard the whirr of their wheel locks and struck out behind him with the full length of the standard. He hit something. The shots went wild and he had time for his sword before they closed. He drew rein sharply and they were borne by him before they were aware. Then from behind he came at them with the point and one went down over the horse's head and the wild blows of the other but grazed down his arm as he was away

again. Still the others pressed after him and he thundered through the peace of the country night, watching the hedge-rows. At last he saw a meadow clear from the road to the river and reined short off. One quick scurry over the turf and his horse took the water. The Puritans had their fill. They halted steaming horses and trained pistols for him. But it was an ill shot for wheel locks in the gloom and the balls whistled far wide. Colonel Stow rose on the farther bank and waved the standard round his head, shouting, "For the King! For the King!"

Wet and ragged, his face splashed with blood, he came back to his regiment. It was mustering for retreat. Major Stewart, enjoying himself in command, received his colonel with no affectation of pleasure. "Od rot me," says he, "I swore you had gone over to the other side."

"It may surprise you," said Colonel Stow sweetly, "but you spoke the truth."

"If I ever knew what you meant," Major Stewart grumbled, "it would be better for both of us."

"Who knows?" said Colonel Stow. "Well, I had to fetch something. Major, will you send that to Prince Rupert with the duty of Colonel Stow's regiment?"

"By the Lord," said Major Stewart very slowly, "it is Cleveland's standard!"

"Your surprise does not flatter me," said Colonel Stow.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### COLONEL STOW KEEPS THE PEACE

THROUGH the darkness, the King's army defiled past the front of my Lord Manchester's position and took the road for Oxford. My Lord Manchester was kind enough to neglect so fair a chance of attack. For which he was after mightily blamed. But it seems likely that at the moment of opportunity my Lord Manchester had enough to do in bracing himself against a torrent of reproaches from the lieutenant general, who loved him hourly less.

So the weary Cavaliers made away north over gray uphill roads the long night through. Not till dawn did they dare stay for a bivouac. On the reverse of the hills beyond Ilsley the camp-fires broke against the first blue light and worn-out men slept where they fell. Colonel Stow and his officers, gathered round a fire, looked at one another queerly through the pungent smoke. There was silence.

The sutler brought them cheese and biscuit and

a jar of ale. "Well, gentlemen," says Colonel Stow, beginning to munch, "there was some matter of a duello, I think. Have you made your election? Which of you have I the honor to meet?"

Major Dick Stewart swore pensively at creation. Then there was silence again.

Colonel Stow shrugged. "The next move is yours, gentlemen," said he, and went on with his cheese.

"Split me," said Major Stewart, and for a while expressed no other desire. Colonel Stow, munching placidly, felt their eyes converge upon him. I can not conceal that he was subject to vanity. Then, "How a murrain can we fight you?" the Major blurted out. "If you'll fight the man that did best to-day, fight yourself. Od rot you, you have beat us all. And we—well, we are all for you, and there is no more to it."

"*Sein d'enfer*," said Captain Sedley daintily, "I will recant some words of mine. I profess I have a cruel tongue. I ask pardon, Colonel, and salute you *de bon cœur*. No Cavalier can do more." And from the rest, who despised Captain Sedley's gift of words, there was a gruff muttering.

Colonel Stow was ready to make repentance easy. "No need for so much, gentlemen," said he quickly, and stretched out his hand to Major Stewart. "The truth is, I was only seeking the right to keep peace with you."

"The truth is," growled Major Stewart, "you are

beyond us and we be fools. Split me, we be fools." The other gentlemen had not the same zeal in confession, but they did not deny it.

It was a holy frame of mind. "I foresee that we shall be a happy regiment, gentlemen," said Colonel Stow. They looked some doubt of living up to his emotions. "If only we had more beer," said he sadly, and won all their hearts. They guffawed affectionately. In the midst of which, vague through the smoky light, a large man came stalking to them. There was no mistaking the Palatine.

"Colonel Stow?" he called out, and with Colonel Stow the officers scrambled to their feet. "I've come for a share of your cheese, gentlemen," says he, and squatted down by their fire. They made their circle again and the Palatine filled his mouth. "I'll swear you get the best provand in the army, Jerry Stow. Mine is maggots," said he.

"Our sutler is the best thief in the army," said Colonel Stow with modest pride.

"Then I shall hang him to encourage the others."

"He would certainly steal the rope, sir."

"Humph!" Prince Rupert's eyes grew keen. "Did he steal that standard?"

"O, sir, he has no time for trifles. Consider this excellent ale—which I do trust never belonged to your Highness."

"It does now," said his Highness, after an admirable potation, "and I defy your sutler. But we are going to talk of that standard, my friend."



"Your Highness will find the beer vastly more interesting."

His Highness finished the beer and remarked that it had no more interest. "Now, my friend, who won that standard back?"

"My regiment had the honor to present it to Your Highness. Your Highness will be good enough to give the credit to the regiment."

"Damn your civilities," said the Palatine. "Do you tell me you marched on Manchester together?"

"I beg Your Highness to count it the gift of the whole regiment. And to believe you wrong no man in thanking all."

"*Höllendonner*, are you to order my conduct?" cried the Palatine. "Who won the thing and how?"

"If Your Highness considers the deed worth any advancement, it should be for Major Stewart here."

"Hang me if you need be so anxious to rob a man of his laurels," said Rupert with a sneer. "'Tis a curst mean spirit and——"

"Here, here," spluttered Major Stewart, "od rot me, this is all topsy turvy. 'Twas the Colonel himself took the thing. I would be boiled before I went hawking among the Ironsides."

Rupert turned upon Colonel Stow. "Now, what a pox is this play for?" said he with some irritation.

"Faith, I did take the thing, but 'twas purely for the honor of the regiment, and I beg Your Highness to give your thanks to Major Stewart, to whom

I owe a debt, for commanding where he might command."

"Humph!" Rupert frowned at him. "You will be so very kind as to tell me a little simple truth."

"It shall be purely bald," said Colonel Stow, and made his tale so.

But before the end of it Rupert was clapping him on the shoulder and guffawing tumultuously. "I would give my garter," he gasped, "to have seen Noll Cromwell on his hinder end." When all was told he was some while in growing grave. Then, "Faith, you ought to have been a knight errant," said he. "And what the devil am I to do for you?" Colonel Stow looked at his major. "Ay, I know," and rising he gripped hands with both of them.

Major Stewart was more red than nature. He grunted profusely, staring at his colonel. "You make me cursed uncomfortable," said he.

That is the whole matter of the standard, which, as Colonel Royston said, was neither war nor business. There are more moral people than he who admire it but little; some of good judgment who sneer at Colonel Stow for his pains. Doubtless there was a gaudy vanity in it all, but if you have no mercy for that, you will not understand Colonel Stow, nor why some men and women loved him strangely.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### LOVERS' MEETING

SO WITH no great loss, yet with no great glory, the King's army won back to Oxford. They had fought a tiresome campaign and ended it no better off than they began. There were some gentlemen, like Colonel Strozzi of the artillery, who began to make ready for a change. The longer the war, the better the Puritan chance of victory; for the King had no money. Oxford welcomed his army with no exuberant gaiety, and even my Lord Jermyn's splendors were something bedraggled.

But Colonel Stow never permitted himself to borrow other people's despair. There was a lilt in his walk as he went through the snow showers of a December morning to wait on Lucinda.

She gave herself to his arms and came from them rosy, with sparkling eyes. Then, as he held her away to look at her, he was aware of an elegant mourning robe, black and silver. Black became Lucinda's richness well. He was swiftly grave. "You have had some loss, child?"

"My mother," said Lucinda calmly. "It was

hard for her to leave the Manor. She never had much strength after."

Colonel Stow frowned at her. He felt a discord. "I am most sorry," he said gravely.

"I do not know," said Lucinda. "She had not been happy. I never remember her happy."

Colonel Stow repented of a rash censure. "Dear, it is hard for you," he said tenderly, and rested his hand on her shoulder.

Lucinda laughed. "O, I—she and I were not much to each other, you know."

Colonel Stow took his hand away. "She was kind to us," he said with a shade of reproof in his tone.

"Was she?" said Lucinda. "I never knew her kind or unkind to any one. Yes, she was like that. I do not think she was fond of life."

Colonel Stow felt a harsher discord. "You are not troubled by much regret," he said severely.

"Why should I pretend?"

Colonel Stow turned away from her to the window and looked out at the whirling snow. She hurt him. He believed in tenderness and the emotions. He was of those who find the worth of man or woman in tears. Lucinda, lying back on her cushions watching him with that strange, puzzling smile of hers, thought him, I suppose, something of a fool. . . . He struggled to convince himself she was not callous. . . . He came to her. "Dear, you are brave . . . and true,"

he said, and felt it sounded queerly. "I am stupid, I think. . . . Indeed, I seek to keep you from sorrow."

"I am not afraid," said Lucinda. "Indeed, sir, I think I never was afraid of anything but you." Her eyes grew dark and intent. "You know—too much of me," she said.

"I would know all to love it better."

Lucinda laughed. "I wonder . . . and I wonder if I know all of you."

"I need no better love at least."

"That may be," she said gravely. Then, tossing back her curls, "Well, sir, and what great deeds have you brought me back from the wars?"

This note was true to Colonel Stow's taste. He smiled at last. "I tell myself I have not done unworthily."

There was gaiety in Lucinda's laugh. She had never been blind to Colonel Stow's vanity and liked him for it the better. "Tell me a score of the finest deeds," said she, settling herself in a delectable pose on her cushions.

"I have made a rabble into a regiment and gentlemen of the tavern into officers."

Lucinda yawned. "It is doubtless more glorious than amusing."

"And they adore me for it."

"But why should I?"

"Nay, Heaven forbid you should adore me."

"I fear it has," said Lucinda.



"I am content. It has bidden you love."

"Why, sir, there was indeed compulsion." Her eyes sparkled wickedness. "But whether of Heaven—well, 'tis not maidenly to think so."

"Faith, I belong to this world," Colonel Stow admitted. "But I think you are not all of another neither."

Her eyes met him fairly still, but a slow blush came. After a while, "I believe you play with me because you have nothing to boast of," she said.

"I have no skill in boasting," said Colonel Stow, and doubtless believed it. "But there is something to tell." And he began the exploit of the standard.

. . . "It was the Ironside himself that grappled me, but I sat him down disconsolate. The sentry at the gate advanced his pike at me, but I made under that and flung myself up in the saddle. There was one of Noll's men in my way and I gave him the standard butt like a Magyar's lance, and he was down, too, and I was away at speed through the town. Noll's men made after me and there was a small affair with a pair of them, for which one is now sorry, before I got a chance to break to the river. We swam that with the pistols blazing all ways behind us, but the Roundheads would not bathe, and I came easily to the army and sent the standard back to the Palatine with the compliments of the regiment." He had his reward. Lucinda's breath came fast and her eyes shone for him. Her hands were close clenched.

"I am glad, I am glad!" she cried. "Yes! . . . And what did Prince Rupert send you back?"

Colonel Stow laughed. "An oath or so." She sat erect and fierce. "Why, you see I was more modest with him than with you and would not tell him whose the deed was."

"But you did?" There was a hard, sharp ring in her voice that he did not know.

"Yes." He looked his surprise at her. "Faith, yes," and he chuckled. "I told him and begged him give the reward to fat Stewart, the major." He laughed happily. The boyish magnificence of it, his own naïve vanity brought him pure joy.

But a queer change came over Lucinda's face. Her lips shaped to a sneer. "You make everything like a boy's game."

Colonel Stow opened his eyes. "Why, yes. All the world is a boy's game, if you make it so."

"I am a woman," said Lucinda.

"No man will ever complain of that."

"Will you give me only a boy?"

He came close beside her. "Is that all I am?" he said in a low voice and slipped his arm about her.

But she broke away. "O, you are like a child that is always crying, 'How fine I am!' I believe you think of nothing but making yourself a fool's hero of mad romance. What kind of man is it that longs and strives to be like mad Quixote? You—you are as vain of it as a girl of her gown."

Colonel Stow flushed. He felt a pitiless truth

about some of that and it troubled him. "'Tis so, in fact, dear," said he with a doleful laugh. "I am something of a peacock."

"In the name of Heaven, do not be meek," cried Lucinda. "That is not to be borne. O, I hate your great souled hero with no brain for himself."

"Why," Colonel Stow protested, "all I have is mighty anxious to take care of me."

"What help is it then? You do a rare, great deed and get nothing for it; you care only to look the Quixote and cry, 'Nay, pay another, not me! I am above such gauds!' But I have no patience for it. I despise a man that is afraid to be greedy."

Colonel Stow shrugged. "I am afraid of many things. I have never denied it."

"And you pretend strength to me?"

Colonel Stow looked in her eyes. "Yes," he said.

She started up. "I hate all this. It is not real. It is all words and a show. Do you know? Do you know? You are making yourself no more than a romance book for me. What worth is there in all you have done? How are you the better? What have you won by it?"

"If you do not know, I can not tell you, madame."

"I detest your loftiness!"

Colonel Stow bowed. "I shall try to get more."

Lucinda stamped her foot. "Do you seek to put me in a passion against you?"

"I hope I may never give you better reason," said

Colonel Stow. "Nay, child, I doubt I am a vain fool, and you are too honest for me. Let it rest. Faith, I can not afford to be at war with you."

"I am in no temper for peace," said Lucinda.

When in a little while Colonel Stow left her his hand was at his chin and his brow furrowed.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### LUCINDA WEEPS

THE court had a wintry melancholy. Its pride was decaying. The assurance of triumph that never came was enfeebled. Queen Henrietta, who expected a child, was out of spirits and there was a notable scarcity of money. It would have been disloyal to affect gaiety and impossible when one's jewels were sold. Colonel Royston compared the assembly in Merton hall to birds at the moulting time. So harsh were their voices, so stale their finery. Colonel Royston had a grim pleasure in the exhibition till he came upon one who excelled the rest in gloom, yet escaped the ridiculous. It was Lucinda. While he bowed he sneered at himself as a fool for seeing her. Lucinda did not speak, but there was appeal in her eyes.

Royston felt himself flush. "I have to offer my regrets, madame," he said with a gesture to her mourning gown.

"My mother."

Colonel Royston bowed again.

"Will you give me escort home?" she said listlessly. "There is no one else."



Royston laughed. "You flatter me." And he made a way for her through the crowd.

Lucinda was of better fortune than some. She had still a coach. Colonel Royston handed her in and showed no zeal to follow. She leaned back with a shrug and a careless, "As you will." Colonel Royston came in beside her.

They were jolted up St. Aldate's. It was not possible to avoid the touch of her shoulder, her perfume. But she showed no interest in Colonel Royston and he looked at her black and then with surprise not all cynical at her listless brow. He was not able to believe in a mourning Lucinda. And yet she was no creature of affectation. "You are not inspiring, madame," said he.

"So I find," said Lucinda with a quick light in her eyes.

"I suppose I am not inflammable," Colonel Royston sneered. She had a trick of waking the brutality in him.

"I was not thinking of you," said Lucinda carelessly.

Colonel Royston did not miss the inference. It was Colonel Stow who failed to answer to her desires. He could easily believe it. And he felt some contempt for both of them. For Lucinda because she was not high enough to be content with his friend; for his friend because he did not satisfy Lucinda's need. "I always found Jerry asked an





uncomfortable virtue of me," he admitted with a grin.

"I do not know why you should sneer?" she looked at him with grave, questioning eyes.

"I am made for it."

"Poor creature," said Lucinda.

The coach drew up at her door in Holywell. He was punctilious in handing her out. With her hand still in his she checked and turned. "Will it please you to come in?"

"I am not amusing, madame."

She gave a queer, scornful laugh. "O, if you are afraid!" and passed on.

But Colonel Royston, who, unlike his friend, conceived himself afraid of nothing, followed her close.

. . . He stood over her while she held out her hands to the fire and its light fell on her neck. "I wonder. . . . Did you ever want more of a woman than she had?"

Colonel Royston laughed. "Always. And therefore took nothing."

"I wonder . . . Does a woman always disappoint a man?"

"Unless he is a fool," Royston assured her.

She leaned her head full back to look up at him. The light laughed about her breast. "And the man—he always disappoints the woman, perhaps?" she said in a low voice.

"If he has disappointed you," said Colonel Roy-

ston with grim emphasis, "I do not admire your desires."

She bent to the fire again. She was silent so long that Royston changed his place to see her full. Her eyes were glistening, her cheeks jeweled with tears.

"Humph. You are not proud of yourself, either, it seems."

She looked up fierce. "No one but you has ever made me do this," she cried and roughly brushed the tears away. She started to her feet and faced him. "It is true. I am ashamed. I would to God I were fit for him. But there is more. I want more." She caught Royston's arm. "You know me. There is wild blood in you, too. I am what I am."

Colonel Royston tried to laugh. "Something of the tiger, I think." But he was flushed and his hand closed on her bare wrist.

"Would you tame me?"

"No, faith, you would make me as wild as yourself."

"I wonder if you could be," she laughed and tried to draw her arm away.

"I can be greedy," said Royston, gripping the other, too. He looked down at her with a smile of no gaiety.

"And I could starve you," Lucinda laughed, leaning away from him so that her weight hung on his hands.



"You would not try."

"La, you for pride! In truth, sir, I can conceive you tiresome as chains."

"They would grip all of you."

"That is what I doubt."

"Or fear?"

She faltered a moment. There was a faint blush on her neck. But, "Nay, faith, I fear nothing," she cried gaily, and laughing at him, drew away. "Is that my charm?"

"Yes. So that a man wants to make you afraid?"

"Alack, poor man!" she laughed.

"O, it would be amusing for him," said Colonel Royston in measured tones. His brows were bent upon her.

"But if I made him fear instead?"

"That is the damnable challenge of you."

She clapped her hands. "I knew! You are afraid already."

Colonel Royston laughed. "You are vain, madame."

She flung her arms wide and stood so in the best of her beauty. "Have I not the right? Nay, but I am not vain. That is little and calm. I am sure of myself. That is why I laugh at Colonel Royston," and she made him a splendid mocking curtsy.

"And what do you want of him, pray?" Royston looked down at her with a grim smile.

"The joy of a fight, sir."

"And a defeat?"

She laughed. There was a baffling mystery in her eyes. "Do you think you move me as I move you?"

"There is other strength than a woman's," said Colonel Royston in a low voice. His eyes were blazing.

"I know no other," said Lucinda, facing him full.

Colonel Royston made one stride to her, flung a hard arm about her and gripped her neck. Crushing the slim whiteness of it in his big bronzed hand, he bore her head back and bent over her.

She was quivering and hot in his grasp, but her eyes brave still. "This is nothing—nothing—a boor's strength, your body strength."

"Is that all?" he muttered and his breath beat on her cheek. "You know," and his grasp grew fiercer. She was helpless utterly in that heavy power and knew it. She laughed reckless. But the laugh broke suddenly and she was pale. Her eyes stared wide. While he watched, his arm fell lax and he let her go. They stood apart gazing steadily at each other.

Then Lucinda gave a little laugh of no joy. "We frighten ourselves, I think."

Colonel Royston did not deny it. He gazed at her still a long while silent, then caught up his cloak and strode out.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### THE HOME OF LOST CAUSES

MATTHIEU-MARC-LUC complained of everything, but chiefly of a nutshell. Everything was wrong and the latter had hit his nose—a spot where dignity is apt to reside. Matthieu-Marc rubbed the offended nose and looked round with indignation for the offender. "You would laugh more if you could always see yourself," he was assured. It was a girl's voice that came through the window of a tiny pastry shop. The owner leaned out to him over her wares and Matthieu-Marc found a wholesome rosy face cheek to cheek with his. He started back. "O, dear," says she, "you are mighty maidenly. Maybe it's why you are so miserable."

Matthieu-Marc shook his head at her. "Be miserable also, mademoiselle. It is your duty."

"Your dinner has fallen out with you?"

"My dinner never falls out with me," said Matthieu-Marc with indignation. "I am the best cook in England."

"O, dear," says the girl while Matthieu-Marc

was pruning himself, "what a silly thing to be. A woman can cook."

Matthieu-Marc made a gesture of despair. "If you can believe a *bêtise* like that you can believe this country a place to be happy in." He approached her pastry with a supercilious eye and helped himself to a simnel cake. "The oven was not hot," says he on the first mouthful.

"If you want something light, why do 'e eat simnel?" quoth she. "If you want to be a man why do 'e be a cook?"

"I am also a soldier," said Matthieu-Marc with dignity.

"Which makes you look so green?"

"It is your country, your bilious country," said Matthieu-Marc. "Bah, your cooking, your fighting, it is all the same; you never know what you want. Therefore your soups are tragedies, your battles farces. Whereas—remark me, mademoiselle—your proper soup should be a gladsome farce, your battle a noble tragedy. You are a country emasculate. You never mean anything."

"Sure, but I do," says the girl. "I mean to make love to you." Matthieu-Marc recoiled. "What a brave cook!"

"Consider my modesty," Matthieu-Marc protested.

"Lud, if I do without it, can not you? You are a sweet thing of a man. You are that ridiculous."

"Mademoiselle," said Matthieu-Marc, "you do not

appreciate me. I am of a melancholic genius." The girl again flicked a nutshell at his nose. "That is not a reply," said Matthieu-Marc.

"That's just what it is," said the girl. "It makes you feel what you are—silly."

"Of what profit is it to me to feel silly?" Matthieu-Marc inquired.

"When you feel silly you'll be happy," said the girl. "I know."

"I would rather not," said Matthieu-Marc sincerely.

The girl pulled a face at him. "That's you," said she. "But you do it always."

Matthieu-Marc made a magnificent gesture. "I am too noble a nature to be happy."

"Sure, you're but a child," said the girl. "And that is why I like you. Do 'e like me, now?" She leaned over her cakes and again the plump face came close to his.

Again Matthieu-Marc recoiled. He coughed. "You look healthy," he said with no enthusiasm.

"I never knew a man so slow with a woman," the girl pouted. "And you a soldier! O, save me!" She put her hands on her hips and laughed without reserve.

Matthieu-Marc swore in French. It was now he who leaned towards her. At which moment a fist was inserted between his ribs. "Ha, wickedness! Wickedness!" said a jovial voice and Matthieu-Marc turned in emotion to discover the roundness



of Alcibiade, who shook his head sorrowfully. "O, my evangelist!"

Matthieu-Marc retreated without dignity, blushing and muttering.

Then Alcibiade entered the pastry shop. "My bet," says the girl, laughing still, "you owe me a shilling."

"Not a denier! You got no kiss of him," Alcibiade protested.

"I would have had but for you."

Alcibiade shook his head at her. "I fear you have been forward, Molly."

"As forward as yourself," quoth Molly with a toss of her head.

"So bad as that?" said Alcibiade, and thought he made her blush.

But the truth is, Oxford was more in the temper of Matthieu-Marc than Alcibiade. The Cavaliers had come at last to misdoubt their fortune. They made no more scapegoats. It was not Rupert whom they condemned, but themselves. Heart and hope had gone out of them. They were not truly ready to yield. Enough of them liked death better than that. But few had any faith in victory.

It was no blame to them. There was no soul in their cause. Their forlorn, melancholy King was not one for whom a man might be content to die. He stirred none to a quicker life. Pity he won and devotion; he could not give a conquering zeal. Indeed, he gave nothing to any man. He asked of all. He

had no vision and his people perished for him in vain.

There have been armies without clothes or food or pay or store of weapons, yet have beaten down the best provided foes. But the King's army felt its lack and was afraid. It had been hard enough to make head against the Puritans when their generals were blunderers and all their regiments out of gear. Now there was a new model and all the old dallying leaders were done away. Sir Thomas Fairfax and Ironside Cromwell, the conquerors of Marston Moor, had command. Already Oxford could feel the change. The Puritan armies were drawing strait bonds about the town. Only the road to the west was open still. By each other way the foraging parties broke in vain about the Puritan outposts. If they dared an attack they found a new strength against them. They were as children fighting with men. Cromwell and Fairfax had given the fierce Puritan zeal all it needed, the strength of discipline and sure command.

So within Oxford there was desolation. All the parasites of wealth were fled, all the ministers of gaiety. "The court," said Rupert, "is a damned diurnal funeral." Who went there still were the King's most affectionate friends and gay as himself. Queen Henrietta was in no case to cheer them. Her one desire was to win to a happier town than Oxford. The few faded courtiers, the quadrangles where now she saw little but weather-beaten

soldiers overthrew her spirits. The very age of the place, stern and austere in its gray, crumbling walls ('tis my Lord Jermyn's judgment) affected her miserably. She was passionate to be gone. My Lord Jermyn found her a reason not all unworthy. He persuaded her that there was danger in Oxford and it was plainly right that her child should be born to safety. So Queen Henrietta fled away to the west and by her flight quickened fear. If Oxford itself were not safe, what use to battle more?

It was a bitter day of springtime when she was borne away. Colonel Stow and Colonel Royston, walking in the meadows by Osney, watched the scant company. Rupert had spared her a squadron not his best and she had a company of the King's Guard. Her coach was in the midst and she huddled in a corner of it and peered out through the misty windows with the face of a peevish child.

Colonel Royston turned away with a shrug. "It's she has sense, Jerry."

"As much as a butterfly."

"What else should a woman be?"

"O, you are an infidel, George. Look at Jermyn riding by as happy as a wet cat."

"Happier than we," growled Colonel Royston. "He is out of it."

Colonel Stow linked arms with his friend. "What is wrong, George?" said he gently.

"Zounds, what is right? This fool King is sinking and we shall be drowned with him."

"Bah, we never believe in defeat, George."

"'Tis a damned lost cause."

"And if it were, are we to be afraid to fail? By Heaven, we will show the world we know how to lose as well as how to win."

"I am not a play actor," growled Colonel Royston. "I do not know how to lose. I have been winning all my life till you brought me here to be trapped like a rat in a hole, to waste myself that you may philander about a wanton."

Colonel Stow dropped his arm and stood away. "Do you know what you have said?"

"And stand to it, by God," said Colonel Royston, and walked on.

Colonel Stow followed a little way off. His face was paled and troubled. . . . "George," he said in a low voice, and after a moment Royston turned, "if we have asked too much of you, if you have given up too much for us—what can a man say?—forgive me. We can be friends still?"

Colonel Royston laughed. "Zounds, I am already too much your friend. Ay, and too much hers, *mordieu*."

"I thank God for it," said Colonel Stow solemnly.

"Do you so?" said Colonel Royston, and laughed again.

Together, silent, they came back to the town, and just beyond the powder mill hit upon Colonel Strozzi, who, resplendent still while others had faded, inserted himself between them. "You are not

rejoicing, my braves?" said he, grinning at their glum faces. "So. What did I tell you? You ought to be traitors. It is more amusing."

"I might guess it more profitable," said Colonel Royston, glancing at his finery.

Colonel Strozzi laughed.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### THE SURPRISE OF LUCINDA

"SHE is a hungry one." So said Molly of the cakeshop, as she watched Lucinda go by. I have thought that Molly, who was a person of breadth in many ways, may have understood Lucinda better than the men who burned for her. Molly, who had a greedy curiosity, knew all her history and was not bitter against her. Indeed, fortune mocked at Lucinda; had her father lived and the old order endured, or had a man won her to the Puritan side, she might have had the power that her soul needed. But with each turn of fortune she was despoiled and she bore it hard.

Doubtless her life was gray enough. The court was dead. Oxford was naked of women. She had no gaiety, no friends, no resource but herself. Seek other home, she could not. What friends she had were harried by the Puritans even as her own Manor lay in the Puritan power. She was not born for restraint. She raged against the barriers of life. Molly, the pastry girl, pronounced her fit for a queen and nothing else. Certainly there was something of nobility in her, for she could not sit

down to be content with unhappiness. She set herself to new plans.

She was well pleased on a day when she saw Colonel Stow come to her with a grave face. He had long been offensively happy. When he only kissed her hand, she pouted. "My dear, 'tis good to be with you," says he with a sigh.

"Faith, 'tis a vice to be content with so little."

"Nay, this is my greatest joy, dear."

"Is it?" says Lucinda dolefully. There was a full yard between them.

"What more do I need?" said Colonel Stow.

Lucinda gave a rueful laugh. "Nothing, it would seem," and she looked at him with comical despair.

"And you, dear?" he took her hand delicately. Her eyes glowed, her lips called to him. He caught her in his arms.

"*Enfin*," says Lucinda to his ear.

"I fear," quoth Colonel Stow, releasing her, "that I did not shine."

"If you had more impudence, sir, you would be happier."

"You also?"

"O, you improve," she laughed. "There is much in good example."

When she was again breathless, "You see," said Colonel Stow, "'tis dangerous to be kind. And, faith, how have I earned it now? For you have been cold a long while, dear."

"You were looking unhappy," said Lucinda, and he was grave again. She laid her hand on his shoulder. "Tell me, then, what is amiss?"

"I am troubled about George. I brought him here and here there is no place for him. He—he is in the right to reproach me."

Lucinda was silent a while. "Indeed, I think we are all of the wrong side here." Colonel Stow shrugged. She took his hand in both of hers. "Tell me truly—do you believe the King can conquer? Truly!" and her eyes compelled him.

"I try to believe—and I doubt," said Colonel Stow.

"Then why—why—why——" she was passionately eager—"why should you stay with him? What bond is there? He has done nothing for you. You have served him too well and won nothing. And the others—if you go to them in time, you should be worth much to them."

"By Heaven, you can not think what you say!" cried Colonel Stow. "What! Break my oath and my honor—O, sure, you—you—O, you have not seen it clear."

"I do see clear," she said quietly, "that is why. You care no more for one cause than the other. You were ready for either when I brought you here. Now we know the King as he is—a melancholy fool with no mind nor heart. What hope of him? Who can believe in him? Nay, what strength has he left? What is there in this dismal town?"

'Tis the one chance for us to seek the others betimes and win honor of them."

Colonel Stow had drawn aloof from her and was staring in utter amazement. "Desert?" he said in a tone she did not know. "You bid me that? Desert from a losing cause? By Heaven, it's the last infamy."

"O, I can not endure your Quixotry," she cried. "You must be always strutting and posing though you bring yourself to ruin and all those that care for you." Then suddenly she changed her tone. "Nay, you think me hard, but I swear it is for you. They have no fit honor for you here. They give you no work, no chance. And you could be great. Dear, for your honor and mine you must seek a better cause."

It was well done. I protest she believed each word, and they were with power for Colonel Stow. He bent and kissed her hand. "Dear, forgive me. You love me too well, I think. Indeed, in all I do, I have no desire but your honor, and 'tis my great pride that your honor is mine, too." He kissed her hand again, complacent, while she looked down at him with a queer smile. "Nay, but there is still goodly work for me here. I come to you from Prince Rupert, who hath chosen me for a thing I like. There is a great convoy of powder and arms coming from Bristol and if it fall to the Puritans we are sped. All the roads are dangerous now, since the Ironside is posted at Abingdon. Rupert

trusts me to ride to Witney and bring it safe." He was smiling, pleased as a boy that has won the prize at the popinjay. "Faith, it will need some soldiering. A task very fit for me, sweetheart."

But Lucinda was grave enough. "If it fall to the Puritans—that is the end," she repeated. "Here is the fortune of your life, then."

Colonel Stow laughed. "Why, 'tis a worthy employ, dear, no more. But one is glad to be chosen."

"O yes, I am glad you are chosen," she said, looking at him strangely.

"Dear, it is good to work for you."

"You can work for me now."

"Ay, faith, there shall be laurels for you. O, we'll harry the Roundheads yet."

She drew in her breath, gazing at him, silent, intent. "Can you not see?" she said in a low voice. "If this convoy means so much, go you to the Puritans with the tidings and help them take it. What will they not do for the man that ends the war?"

Colonel Stow started up. "Lucinda! You! My God, what devil is in you? 'Tis a base, traitorous infamy. You have not thought. You can not mean it."

"I mean that a man should fight for himself," cried Lucinda. "What have they given, what can they give you here? What can you offer me but ruin? I tell you I will not bear it. If you would win me, win a fit place for me."

"Fit place? The place of a mean traitor whom



all men loathe. Would you have me that? Would you mate with such a one? In God's name, think again. You can not be so mad, so—what words are there?"

"I have thought," said Lucinda calmly. "Have I been easy and happy all this while seeing you in no honor and our cause falling to dust? Yes, I have thought often. If you would have me, you must make me a place. There is nothing to be won here, nothing, you know it."

"Madame, there is honor to be won if no honors," said Colonel Stow.

"I am in no mood for your prettiness," Lucinda cried. "Look you now. Here is occasion to your hand. You may go to the Roundheads with a great prize. You can make terms for high fortune there. We are so set that the chance can not come again. Traitor, you say? Who dares call a man traitor if he has power? You can win it if you will. Choose!"

"I would lose you and lose all sooner," said Colonel Stow. He was white to the lips.

Lucinda smiled. "You have done it," she said.

"No, by Heaven, it can not be!" He knelt on one knee beside her and caught her hands and crushed them in his. They were cold. "My love, my love, you must not fail yourself so, you who are very queen of life and strength, you can not yield to what's base. Dear, be true! What is fame or power if true men despise you? Who cares if all

fails here? We have our honor still and our love, and we are lords of life."

Lucinda laughed again. "Mad Quixote. Silly, mad Quixote," she said. "Good-by."

Colonel Stow looked at her a long time. His lips were trembling and she mocked at him. He rose unsteadily and went out like a blind man.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### COLONEL STOW WARNS HIS FRIEND

MOLLY, the cake girl, saw a lithe woman speed by her window to the door of Colonel Royston's lodging. "Hey! This is a new business," said she.

Colonel Royston was killing the hours by carving elaborate chessmen (he had always a taste in that kind and there is still a set—but that is no matter here). Sudden, silent, there stood against his door a tall woman in black. He put down his tool gently. He was not a man of surprises, nor for all his bulk, clumsy. She threw back her hood, her cloak. He saw Lucinda, lithe, strong, her vivid lips and hair, her eyes fiercely bright. She was all black from chin to the ground, save for silver about her bosom.

"You are most appealing," said Colonel Royston with a sneer as he rose.

She looked about the little, dark, wainscoted room. "You are quite alone?" she breathed.

"'Tis immodest as you could desire," Royston sneered.

"I am beyond all that," said Lucinda quietly. She

sat by his table, and putting her elbows on it and her chin on her hands, looked at him full. "This is a matter of your life and mine."

"They are, I thank God, separate," said Colonel Royston.

Then he saw that mocking smile of hers. "Are you afraid?" There was a ripple of mirth in her voice. "You know that is a lie."

"I know you can wake the brute in me," said Royston. "If that is like to comfort you, you best know."

She laughed outright. "Do you think I fear you? Nay, I love you when you shake off your bonds. And you—do I wake nothing but the brute? No longing, no joy? Once you had me by your heart. Was it sorrow?"

Colonel Royston looked at her long. "What is it you want?" he said gruffly.

"Life . . . free life and strength and joy."

Colonel Royston rose and turned from her and kicked the dying logs to a blaze. "There is one who can give you more than I, madame. My friend."

"I am done with him," she cried.

Colonel Royston muttered something under his breath.

Her laugh rang harsh. "He! He never knew me—a popinjay, a play actor, a mad knight errant. Now he is pleased to cast me off—because he could not suffice me—a narrow fool!"

"Has he found you out?" Royston sneered.

"He—that dull, cold-blooded thing! Nay, I have found his weakness. I am done with him."

Royston laughed too. "O, madame, no one will doubt who is in the right of it. I'gad, I pity you and give him joy. Whom have you played traitor with now?"

"Do you believe that?" she said with quiet scorn. "Am I any man's woman? I'll give nothing for who does not give me all. He—he can not. There is no power in him." She rose and came to Royston and put one hand on his shoulder. "Nay, then, look at me if you do not fear." With a quick, impatient movement Royston turned to face her. He was flushed and his brow drawn. There was blood in her cheeks too. She throbbed and her eyes glowed dark with eager life. "Am I fit for scorn," she said in a low voice, "am I naught for a man's heart? Try me."

For a long while they stood against each other, fierce eyed, wild of heart. Then, with a strange, hoarse cry, Royston caught her and crushed her helpless and hurt against his breast. He felt her move in his grip and her arms closed about him passionately. She sought his kiss . . .

Panting, crimson, she struggled away and held him from her at the full length of her arm. "No," she gasped. "No, I can not bear it. O, that is life indeed."



Royston gripped her hand. "I have you now. You are for me, for me. I'll not spare you."

Her lips were parted, she trembled a little. Her face told pain. Then a smile transformed it and her eyes shone. She opened her arms. "I ask no mercy," she said. Again she was close against him. . . . "We, we are fit mates! You are fierce as I. And I give. Ah, do I not?"

"Give? Yes. Heaven and hell in one. And I want all, by God!"

"Heaven and hell," she repeated and clung to him and laughed again. "That is life . . . Nay, then, let me go," and she came from him and flung the casements open and stood in the rush of the clean spring air, arms wide, drinking it greedily with swelling bosom. Colonel Royston stood apart and watched her, his full, handsome face dark and grim. He strode to her and caught her waist in his arm. She did not yield; she stood alone, lithe and strong, looking through the wind. "Yes. We shall make people suffer," she said and laughed.

"What do we care?" quoth Royston, compelling her against him.

"I am glad," she said, and suddenly turned to him. "Power, I want power. You'll take me away from here, out of this dull decay?"

"Zounds, I ask no better," he laughed. "I have had no joy here, and we had never come but for you, mistress." He took her face in his hand and

turned it to please himself. "I suppose you want to meet Jerry as much as I do," he sneered.

"I hate him! I despise him!"

Royston shrugged. "Because he'll despise us?"

"O, you make an idol of that fool!" she cried passionately. "Faith, I'll teach you better. I'll leave you no taste for him."

"I believe that," growled Royston.

Below stairs they heard Colonel Stow's voice. Lucinda sprang away, catching wildly at her cloak. Royston flung open the door of his bed-chamber and signed her in. Then he sat down again and with slow care began to carve his chessmen.

Colonel Stow came in. Royston looked up to nod at him carelessly. He appeared lean and harassed. "You are alone?" Royston waved his tool to the empty room. "They said you had a lady with you."

"O, bah, a woman of naught," said Royston with vigor. "And she will not trouble you. She is gone."

Colonel Stow sat down heavily and was as if his strength had gone out of him. He became conscious of some contempt in Royston's stare. "Do I look a weakling, George? I know. I am ashamed that it hurts me so. By Heaven, I am a coward." He shivered and contrived to affect a joyless smile. "Yes, you don't see the best of me, George. I can not hide from you. I—I shall go on. But I am afraid. I have nothing in life to trust."

Royston gave a crooked smile. "Not even me," he said.

Colonel Stow reached for his hand, but the grav-ing tool was in it and Royston laughed. "You. Yes, you have given up enough for me."

"O, lud, do not be grateful," Royston cried. "Well, I judge from your cryptic lamentations ma-dame is unkind?"

"That is finished."

"I give you joy. She never deserved you."

Colonel Stow shrugged. "Is that comfort? . . . Well . . . I must needs tell you . . . It is over . . . She . . . she is base."

"Good lack, does that surprise you?" Royston gave a harsh laugh.

"I would to God it had been I!" Colonel Stow cried. "If I had played traitor, little matter. But she, she that was the heart of my life——" He turned away to hide his face and Royston heard him groan. "Bah, I am a fool to come whining so, but it is an ease to speak to you, George."

Colonel Royston was not gentle. "You were a fool with her," he said. "She understood you as I do a virgin saint. She cared as much for your kind of love as I do for religion. And you must be making an angel of her who was just a wild woman. Lud, I have been waiting for the tragedy."

Colonel Stow thrust back his hair. "O, I have been a dreamer. I know . . . and still, by Heaven, I am glad of the dream . . . Well,

'tis done . . . George, she bade me play traitor. And now, when we are come to the turn of the fight."

"The better pay for treason," Royston shrugged.

"The more damnable shame," said Colonel Stow sharply. He looked long at his friend. "George, I do not know, but—but I have thought that you had a kindness for her. If 'tis not so, well. And I know you have had ill luck here. She might seek—well, you'll not let her work on you? She has a devilish art to kindle a man."

Royston laughed. "Ha, now we come to it. I am warned to be righteous, am I? I would not take it from any man alive. As for your woman, I know her well enough for what she is, wild life without honor or shame. She is naught to me and shall be so, I swear." He laughed with more vigor than Colonel Stow understood. "And for myself, I'll have my own will, and go my own way, in spite of every woman out of hell. Bah, what have I to do with loyalty? I am loyal to who pays me. That's the creed for a gentleman of the sword. It was yours once and is still mine. I have pledged no faith here. I have no trust to answer. If it serves my turn to stay, I'll stay. If it suits me best to be Puritan, I'll go. And who is in the right to reproach me? What have they done to keep me here? Zounds, I will be schooled by no man."

Colonel Stow rested his head on his hand. "I

have asked enough of you, I know. I have brought you to an ill cause. You'll forgive me, George?"

"O, lud, have done with that. I have no blame for you. Have none for me. Let us go our own ways."

Colonel Stow looked up quickly. "We are friends still?"

"If you can be," said Royston with a sneer. "But I have my own life to live."

"I know," said Colonel Stow sadly. "I know." And again he looked long silent at his friend. "Well . . . we go on . . . Do you feel blind, George?"

Royston did not answer. He let Colonel Stow take his hand and grip it as he went out.

The door clanged, his spurs clanked over the stones and Lucinda started out of hiding. "Faith, sir, you had fair words for me," she cried. "You forget that I heard all."

"I meant you to," said Colonel Royston.

"You mock me, then?"

"He mocked you when he thought you an angel," Colonel Royston gave an ugly laugh. "O, you shall not cheat yourself nor me. We have done with honor now. We stand for ourselves. We are greedy for all the pride of life. But, i' God's name, let us have no sham of virtue to ourselves. It makes me sick."

She came to him, peering close at him in the



gloom while her fingers twisted in his sash. He was sneering. "Yes, you are strong," she said.

"The worse for us both. Well, we must be gone out of this place. When can you be ready?"

She laughed. "Ah, you are afraid to face Colonel Stow again."

"Yes." Royston frowned at her. "I am, by God. You have ruined us two. It was you that brought us to this cursed cause. You have broken his life. You have dragged us apart. I shall not forget. And I think you will pay for all with me."

He saw that strange, mocking smile of hers. "Let us try," she said and put her hands in his. They were crushed till she bit her lips for the pain. She came nearer still, and her breast touched his . . . They were lost . . .

"When will you come with me?" said Royston hoarsely. "When can you be gone?"

"Yes, yes, I will go when you will," she gasped. "Now—to-night, if it please you. Nay, but enough now. Let me go."

She sank to a chair and tried to compose herself. In a moment she was gay with bubbling laughter. "Do you know why we quarreled? He had some tale of a mighty great convoy that is coming from Bristol. If it falls to the Puritans, says he, we are all undone. Why, then, take the tidings to the Puritans, quoth I, give them the last victory and make your profit of it. Then monsieur was all of a flame,

like a fool in a tragedy. Is't not delicate? For now we can have our advantage of it. Do you bear the news to Cromwell and make your fortune."

"I will go bail the devil is a woman," said Royston, glowering down at her.

She gave back his own words with a laugh, "O, we have done with honor now."

But Royston was in a difficulty you would not expect her to understand. Out of battle, your gentleman of the sword might change sides when he chose, but he must not bear the plans of one to the other. That was bred in Colonel Royston with his profession, but not in Lucinda. For him who had broken faith with his friend to let the etiquette of the mercenary stay him from a profitable treason was plainly ridiculous. She gazed at him in wondering contempt. Even he, then, had some of the stupid scruples of Colonel Stow. She despised all men for creatures chained in convention. . . . But Colonel Royston was not in a mood to hesitate long. To possess her he had cast away already the best thing he had. The rest went light. . . . Swiftly he saw his account in her tale—how to make it sound fairly to the Puritans and give him footing there. "Well, what more do you know, madame spy?" quoth he with a grim smile. "When does your precious convoy come? Who has it in command?"

"It is close here now, I think. They are to send out some force to escort it in."

"Ay, that will be to Witney," said Royston to himself. "And who is in command?"

Lucinda had the wit to lie. She could feel that if he were told the truth then, if he knew the convoy were trusted to Colonel Stow, he would have none of the treason. He was not ready yet to hurt the fame of his friend. A word of the truth then had changed the fortune of more lives than theirs. But she lied easily. "Nay, I do not know that. He did not tell me."

"Two regiments, may be," said Colonel Royston to himself and walked to the window. "They will not go beyond Witney. It would be neater to snatch the convoy first." He faced round on her. "When do they come?"

"At once. To-morrow, I think," she said hastily. She did not know him in this mood. The keen note of command troubled her, made her unsure.

"So. We must be gone to-night. You must leave your fine dresses behind. You can take no more than you brought. Be ready for me in two hours. I will have a horse for you."

"O, you are too masterful, sir."

"I'll be that with you or nothing," growled Royston, frowning at her . . . "and, by Heaven, I do not much care which."

She gave a reckless laugh. "I swear that you shall," she said and put up her lips to be kissed.

A little while before, Colonel Stow, turning in under Tom Tower, was saluted by the officer of

the King's Guard. While he answered he saw that it was Gilbert Bourne. With a queer laugh he turned aside to grip the lad's hand. "You were the luckier," he said and went on his way.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL FINDS AN HONEST MAN

**T**HROUGH the windy dark, Lucinda rode with Royston and thought of a night when she was borne in another man's arms. It was springtime again and the wild thrill of it in the air, but Colonel Royston was not inspired. He had not the dreams of his friend nor the longing to give Lucinda a new life. She sufficed to him what she was. And he put her by. His mind was devoted to the practical need of the instant, to the neat *détour* that brought them out of Oxford unseen, unsuspected, by the north road and round the fords at Godstow and Witham to Cumnor, safe on the Abingdon road. It was a perfect evasion. Then, with the methodical carefulness that distinguished him, he made up his story for Cromwell. Of the life beyond, of the woman's call, he had no care. It may be that his mind shrank from it. But Lucinda remembered the earlier time.

It was a dark gray sky, broken in gulfs of blue that bore the stars. They gave light enough to make all things vague. Royston rode beside her like a creature of dream; the hedge-rows stood vast



and fantastic; the very road played tricks with her eyes, turned when it went straight, was rough when it was smooth. More than once, fancying she saw a brook or a quag, she reined up sharp. "Zounds, what ails you?" cried Royston at last, startled from his plans.

"This road is mad, I think, or my eyes." Then, with a nervous laugh, "We are mad, you know."

"And we will ride on, by God," said Royston.

The west wind came across them, tingling and keen. On either side the trees were loud in a wild chorus and changing color and shape for each moment. Feathery, powdered catkins brushed across their faces and now a light bough beaten down stung like a whip as they passed. All the night was full of ghostly fear and tumult and strife. When they came down the slope to the wide, dark river levels the uncurbed wind smote stronger, whistling shrill about them and buffeting with mighty thrusts. She cowered before it and shrank into her hood and shivered. All along the way the pollard willows tossed in mad shapes like ghastly dwarfs adance. Her mind was away in strange, ill dreams. She felt herself caught in some grim mockery of life, where nothing was real and nothing made glad. And still she was pierced with memories of that earlier time, of that wild night of joy when he had made her feel the very spirit of the world's force. . . . She looked uneasily at Royston. But he had no care for her. He rode erect, staring right

on, his mind knit upon his own plans. . . . And the wind yelled at her and the clouds banked thicker before it and the stars went out.

She was mightily weary and cold before, out of a heavier mass of darkness, tiny lights mocked at them. In a moment after came the challenge of the outposts at Abingdon.

"Who goes? Who goes? Halt or I fire."

"Travelers to lie at Abingdon," quoth Colonel Royston.

"Whence come ye?"

"From Oxford."

"Guard! Turn out, guard!"

Royston turned to Lucinda with a sneering smile. "They are naïve here. No place for you." But Colonel Royston himself never understood the Puritan simplicity. If he had he had made another end.

A sergeant came with his lantern and held it aloft to scan them. "Ye are out of Oxford?"

"Ay."

"Why seek ye this godly army?"

"Sir, for edification."

"The Lord advance it! But wherefore in the company of a woman?"

"Regard me as her redeemer. In fine, sir, I have been her salvation. She hath put me in the godly mind to seek you out."

"I like you not, young man. Nevertheless, ye may be even as Lot which fled out of Sodom. Pur-

sue not his evil example. And in any case you will go before the lieutenant general."

"It is my earnest desire," said Royston. "Having first found a lodging for the lady, who is all aweary." He preferred to deal with Cromwell alone.

"The lieutenant general desires no women," quoth the sergeant with scorn. "March!"

"Happy man!" quoth Royston. As he walked his horse forward the sergeant took the bridle and so with a pikeman on either hand and Lucinda following meekly, they came to Abingdon. The narrow street was all peaceful. There was no sign of soldiery, no rabble, no loungers. Only through the lighted windows they could see the gathering of companies and they heard chanting and the elect whine of Puritan prayer.

"And what of a lodging?" quoth Royston. "I suppose all your inns are full to the door of godliness?"

"No man of this army lies in a tavern who can find him another bed," said the sergeant severely.

Royston whistled. But he had met fanatics before and knew their strength. The sergeant was no boaster. It proved easy to find Lucinda lodging at the Green Man Inn. Royston was led on to the house called the Abbey by the river.

It was a room of bare brick walls set with timber and high, dim, timbered roof. The candles flickered and guttered in the crossing drafts. Colonel

Royston stopped short and saluted. He was not used to admire other men. But, "this is the first King I have seen in England," said he to himself.

It was no beauty, at least. A big, loose man that spread over his chair; the wisp of linen at the collar of his buff coat was crumpled and stained with blood; his face was coarse, fleshy and red, but the hard angles of the bones stood out and in the midst a mighty ridge, a stockade of a nose; there was something that might have been desire for moustachios or lack of a razor; his under lip was cracked and raw; his hair hung in a lank mass of pale brown. But there was height in the ample brow and the seaming furrows of endurance and thought. But his eyes had the true light of steel and a ruthless strength.

The lieutenant general surveyed Colonel Royston, who liked it well enough. He never doubted his own powers. "Who art thou, friend?"

"George Royston, sometime major in the service of Gustav Adolf and colonel with the Duke of Weimar."

"What make you here?"

"Safety for a woman, work for myself."

A man who had been writing at Cromwell's elbow looked up at the neat phrase. This was one with an air of some refinement, trim and precise, the commissary general, Ireton. "You come from Oxford?" said he amiably.

"A plain tale can be brief, sir. I came to Eng-

land on a quarrel with M. de Turenne. I am bred to war and born for it, but little skilled in the matter of politic. I chose the King, because the King's cause should be England's." He laughed. "That fancy amuses me now, gentlemen. I have been in Oxford. Yes, I have been in Oxford and seen the Popish lasciviousness of that court and the rule of fools. I found swiftly that it was no place for a soldier who honored himself and feared God. I made my resolve to seek the honest cause—yours, sir." He saluted stiffly. "I'll confess I was hastened at the last by the persecution of an honorable lady. It was a maid brought to that Babylon by her mother, my Lady Weston. She dying, left the girl friendless. She was thereafter pursued by the lordlings of that vile court most shamefully—bah, I am hot at speaking of it. Well. She could get there no succor nor redress. Then I—for I profess an honest affection for her—bade her come with me to a camp where men regard the honor of women. The which she hath done. I have lodged her here and am here to serve you. I can do it."

"You say well, friend," quoth Cromwell.

The commissary general, who was tapping his cheek with a quill, smiled pleasantly. "And how would you seek to serve?" said he.

"Sir, I have fought against Papists fifteen years and held many commands, whereof you shall have proof at your leisure. My skill is in chief with musket and pike, but for that, time enough. There



is more pressing matter. Sir, ere I left Oxford to-day there came to me by a braggart captain in liquor, tidings of that which touches your fortune. I take no shame to tell you. I have no faith to keep with that foul court. So then. They are in ill straits for arms and powder. Their whole hope in the war depends on a new great convoy. This comes from Bristol and hath now been days upon the road. It journeys with little guard, but they will send out from Oxford a force to meet it—and, sir, it should come to Burford or Witney by to-morrow. But if it fall to you and not to them you have gone far to end the war.”

The frown gathered on Cromwell’s brow. He began with a score of sharp questions. How great was this convoy? with what force? at what speed could it move? and the like. To all Royston had a quick answer, true or false. Cromwell looked on him with favor. “Thou art a ready man, friend. The Lord needs such.”

“Therefore, doubtless, He made me so,” said Colonel Royston devoutly.

“O, sir, hold fast to that!” Cromwell cried. “Thou art made unto His glory and miserably dost thou fail it. Yet be of good heart and so run that thou mayest obtain.”

“It is ever my design, sir,” said Colonel Royston quite sincerely.

Cromwell thrust out his arms over his head. “O, laggards, laggards! The Lord deliver me from

laggards! Sir, there is naught to be feared but our own sin and sloth."

"Wherein, alas, we are too well provided," said Royston.

Cromwell's hands fell. His face was grave and sad. "You say well," he muttered, and appeared to talk to himself.

The commissary general had remained always amiable of air. "And do I hear you promise the capture of this convoy?" he asked.

"Spare a regiment of horse in the morning, let me be its guide and I'll answer for all."

"It is very handsome in you," the commissary murmured and glanced from him to Cromwell. "The gentleman desires to be trusted with a regiment, sir."

"The Lord, the Lord shall laugh at him," muttered Cromwell. "What is't? A regiment, quotha?" He bent his brows upon Royston. "Well. And how wouldst thou go with it, friend?"

Colonel Royston was ready. A swift detour by Newbridge should bring them astride the western road on the farther side of Witney. Then, putting out a picket to guard them from Oxford, they would send vedettes out westward to make touch with the convoy, find it, capture it and strike for Abingdon again.

"It likes me well," said Cromwell.

"Colonel Budd's horse, sir?" quoth the commissary quickly.

"A very lovely company. Sir, put all on God."

"I will make my endeavor, sir," said Royston and saluted, and was going.

"We will provide you a billet, sir," said the commissary again in some haste.

Colonel Royston saluted him, too, and was dismissed in the charge of a sergeant.

"There is a soul in an honest, thriving way," quoth Cromwell.

"I should have liked him better," said the commissary, "if he had offered us nothing."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### AT WITNEY TOWN

COLONEL ROYSTON was waked from his bed of clean hay at dawn, but he did not arrive in the quarters of Colonel Jacob Budd in time to hear a conversation of the commissary. "The orders are plain to you, Colonel?"

"Plain, sir. May I be God's executioner! And if it be not so; if this one that guides me prove an hireling, a man of Belial——"

"Why, you may still be God's executioner," said the commissary, smiling.

Colonel Budd almost laughed. In a little while came Colonel Royston. The commissary saluted him affably. "Colonel Budd, this is Colonel George Royston, who hath designed this fair work. I would have you know him well."

"The honor is mine," said Colonel Royston.

Colonel Budd did not deny it.

"The lieutenant general bids you to breakfast," said the commissary.

Colonel Royston appreciated the honor, but his appetite was something affected by the lieutenant general taking occasion to expound the second

beast of the apocalypse. Colonel Budd differed from his general concerning the significance of the first horn, said so and they parted hot.

"Well, sir, well, shall we ride?" said Royston eagerly, as they came out together.

"After some small exercise," said Colonel Budd.

Colonel Budd paraded his regiment in the meadows by the Ock and there wrestled in prayer for the space of half an hour, the troopers groaning or giving praise as they were moved. Colonel Royston chiefly groaned. But he confessed that in the end they wheeled beautifully into column of troop. They took the road for Kingston Bagpuize chanting, not sweetly—

O, Lord God, unto Whom alone all vengeance doth  
belong;

O, mighty God, Who vengeance own'st, shine forth,  
avenging wrong;

Lift up Thyself, Thou of the earth the sovereign  
Judge that art,

And unto them that are so proud a due reward im-  
part.

They had certainly a vile ear for music, but it annoyed Colonel Royston that he could find no other fault with them. They were men of seasoned strength, and their bearing approved them soldierly. They were equipped to admiration, with breasts and backs of steel over their buff coats, pot helmets, a



pair of long pistols each and a sword. There was hardly a worthless charger in the regiment. Sturdy beasts, plainly bred in the fen levels, there could be no better for a campaign in the valleys and heavy turf hills of middle England. Not the guard of Gustavus was better provided. Colonel Royston thought with a sneer of the ragged squadrons of King Charles. So they rode on, a goodly sight, a long trail of steel, between the whitening willows of the flat grass lands, while the wayward sunlight flashed on their arms and made splendor in the thin cloud of dust.

In a space between psalms Colonel Jacob Budd engaged Colonel Royston's attention. "Thou art surely a brand snatched from the burning, my good friend?"

"It was I did the snatching."

Colonel Budd groaned. "I perceive thou art yet far from the truth and in the bondage of Arminius!"

"I do not know him."

"'Tis a minister of Beelzebub."

Colonel Royston shook his head. "I can not give you joy of your acquaintance."

"Which taught the abominable heresy that whosoever will, may be saved. Whereas, friend, whereas (as I shall look to expound to you more generously), the sweet truth is, there be some elected to damnation, which they can by no means escape. And this shall be a goodly comfort, for it is all to the glory of God."

Colonel Royston grunted. Never a man had less taste for theology than he.

"And look you, if thou dost think (poor worm!) that thou hast saved thyself, thou art still in the blindness of sin. No man saveth himself, seeing that all are worms. Yet some in the all-seeing providence of God are elected to salvation and by no strength nor good works of their own are saved. Whereof they have a sweet and blessed assurance. There is also another assurance, the assurance of damnation, which I would give you."

"I'gad," cried Royston. "I have a very certain assurance of damnation if we go across the river with no vedettes out."

Colonel Budd scowled at him. It was the more objectionable in that it could not be denied. They were already close upon the river and beyond lay the enemy's country. He gave hoarse orders (Royston marked with disdain the use of the stiff Dutch drill for the simpler Swedish) and the column of route was protected with double vedettes and an advance guard before they came to Newbridge.

Swollen with the spring rains, the two rivers came turbid and swift and crashed against each other in a whirlpool of foam and roared through the narrow stone arches. On the bridge the regiment halted while the vedettes thrust forward under the trees up the diverging tracks. There was no danger, and at the old pace, but fallen silent, they took the road to Witney. Soon there were no more trees. They

rode over a dead level of flat land where the furrows already were richly green. Laborers straightened themselves and leaned on their hoes, gazing stolidly while the regiment passed and stolidly fell to work again. It was not a war of the people. They cared little for its moves or its fortune, and to make a show, soldiers were stale. So through Standlake and Brighthampton, where the women laughed and waved kerchiefs while stern Puritan troopers found ill names for them, they made on toward the circling hills.

Something after noon they struck the road to the west upon the high ground beyond Witney and straightway sent back a party to watch for any force from Oxford. The main body of the regiment moved westward at leisure while an advance guard sped far in front. But the advance guard came nearly into Burford and found nothing and the main body halted on the hill above Asthall and made a meal of biscuit and cheese from the knapsacks. Colonel Royston went forward. It was drawing towards twilight when he came back in a hurry with most of the guard clattering about him. "They are drawn close to Burford, sir," he cried, reining up. "A quarter-mile of them, as I judge, wains and pack horses, and no guard at all."

"Praise the Lord which hath delivered them into our hands," quoth Colonel Budd.

"Let's hatch our chickens before we count 'em," said Royston, whose wisdom was of another color.

"Give me leave, sir; if we wait them there in the hollow between the two hills we shall be well hidden and they well caught."

"What, sir, will you teach me?" cried Colonel Budd.

"Nay, sir, I could not," said Royston smoothly. "None the less, will you move, sir? Will you move?"

Colonel Budd snorted with wrath. But the plan was so plainly best that he could not refuse it. In a moment the regiment was dropping out of sight down the hill. Once in the hollow the half of them were dismounted and lay down in the ditches. A squadron hid itself craftily in the hollows of the slope of either hill. The rest, with the led horses, made toward the river and were lost.

It was already dusk. The hapless convoy came on innocently. The locked wheels of the wains groaned down the hill while the wagoners cursed their lurching horses that could not hold back enough on the loose road. There was no more guard than some score mounted men, riding by twos and threes, gossiping together.

The first of the wagons were down on the level and halted for unshackling their wheels. The whole train stayed perforce. Then from the ditch rose Colonel Budd and shouted. His dismounted men dashed upon the convoy and the red flame of powder broke the gloom. On either hill side the mounted squadrons swept the road and before and behind escape was barred, even if the laden wagons could

have made up hill at speed. It was a trap that might have held a fiercer prey. The convoy was in hopeless straits. Its few mounted men were pistoled speedily and the Puritans fell on the wretched wagoners, who had no arms.

"Quarter, sir," cried Colonel Royston with an oath, "bid them give quarter."

"The curse of Saul be upon thee," cried Colonel Budd, and thundered to his men: "Smite, and spare not! Smite, and spare not!" He turned to Royston again. "Verily, the wrath of the Lord is kindled against thee, for His pleasure is in the blood of His enemies."

Colonel Royston turned away with a gesture of disgust and made for his horse. He loved war too well to like an idle butchery.

But the Puritan troopers had a holy lust for their work. The wretched wagoners ran hither and thither in a ghastly fear, struck blindly with naked hands at men who kept them off with steel, knelt, shrieking piteously like children for mercy. There was none. They hid beneath the wagons and in the ditches and the Puritan troopers dragged them out and slew. The hollows were carpeted with death and blood.

So much time they wasted on this godly work that it was full dark before they started the convoy to moving again and climbed away from the horror.

Colonel Budd came up beside Royston and



touched his arm. "Friend, I fear me thou art an Amalekite at heart."

"Friend," said Colonel Royston, who was in no good temper, "I see well thou art no soldier."

"How now?" cried the Puritan. "What naughty frowardness is this? Be assured I am a man set in authority and—"

"And not fit for it, i'gad," cried Royston. "But for this silly butchery we might have been four miles away. We move at a foot's pace with all this gear and each hour this side the river is dangerous."

The Puritan laughed. "I perceive you have no courage, friend."

"Not a whit under your command. 'Tis an ill fight when a fool is colonel."

"You shall answer that, sir," cried Colonel Budd. "You shall answer it to the lieutenant general."

"I will make good each word if we ever get to him."

"O fool and faint-hearted! Verily, I can scarce be angry with thee, thou art a babe for fear. What haste is there? We will cross by the ford at Bablockhithe and be at Abingdon by midnight."

"Bablockhithe?" Royston gasped in most honest amazement. "Bablockhithe?"

"Well, sirrah, and is't not the shortest way?"

"I'gad, the longest way round is here the shortest way home. It's tempting Providence to venture near Oxford."

"The Lord, sir, will take care of His own."

"That is why I tremble for us. Nay, sir, if you would not lose all, go round by Newbridge as we came."

Colonel Budd was plainly amused. "Verily, thou art matter of mirth with thy host of fears. What have we to dread from Oxford? We have kept watch all day and there is nothing moving thence."

"The devil himself may be moving now. They expect this convoy and some guard must come for it. Look you, sir, if you do your duty you will consult for safety and go round by Newbridge."

"Do you think to school me?" cried Colonel Budd. "What! Would you be my master? Be assured, sir, I am set in authority and thou shalt not minish it."

Colonel Royston shrugged. "Go to the devil your own way. Remember, I told you where you were going."

Colonel Budd preached him a sermon concerning original sin and the effectual calling of the elect.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### AT BABLOCKHITHE

SOMETHING belongs to Master Thomas White, rector of Witney, though while he lived the good man was careful not to claim it. He was the friend of all men, even Anabaptists, but would rather not have been. His private affections bound him to church and King, but he concealed them carefully and lived and died in prosperity. None the less, he did his affections a good turn when he safely could and his chance came on this evening of spring. It was the rector's custom to get an appetite for supper by a walk from the rectory past the Butter Cross to the bridge, whereby he saw how the bulk of his parish was behaving and could also gossip with it.

On this night he was with Master Goundrey, a cloth worker, debating the effect of the war on the price of wool, when they heard the rumble of the Puritans and their convoy. The rector and Master Goundrey drew down toward the bridge with many another, expecting to see the King's colors. They were altogether surprised. Puritans from the westward, a Puritan convoy through Witney—the whole

affair was amazing. They gaped at the long cavalcade rolling slowly over the bridge and the Puritan troopers bade them be gone to their beds. But the rector was gone.

I conceive him less benign and more capable than he was supposed. He made off to the rectory, saddled his cob and saying that he was away to visit a sick soul at Cogges, was soon upon the track of the Puritans. It was easy to catch them, for the wagons could make no more than a walk. He saw them turn off by Newland for Stanton Harcourt and Bablockhithe, then followed them no longer, but made a straight road for Oxford. He guessed right. There were Royalists riding out to meet that convoy. In the middle of Eynsham village, in the square by the old market-house, he tumbled into them.

Colonel Stow, being advised that the convoy was ordered not to make Witney till midnight, had left Oxford at sundown and was well in advance of his time. They brought him the rector, panting on a blown steed, peering at him out of the dark with eyes swelling white. "For the King?" gasped the rector.

"Without doubt."

"Praise God," quoth the rector, and collected his scattered wits.

"If you will give me a reason," said Colonel Stow, his hand on his moustachio, considering this strange person.

"Do you come for a long convoy from the west?"

"And have therefore scant time for you, sir."

"Alack, sir, you are all out of time. 'Tis taken already by the Roundheads."

"The devil!"

"Yes, sir," said the rector heartily. "And they are gone with it to Stanton Harcourt and Bablockhithe."

Colonel Stow was hard on his moustachio and frowning. It was difficult to conceive that the Roundheads had known so precisely when to come and where. "Who are you, sir?" he said sharply.

"Sir, I am the rector of Witney, who——" a smile covered his red face, "who live at peace with all men and serve my King quietly, sir, quietly."

Colonel Stow considered him still some moments. "You would advise me to believe you?"

The rector laughed out: "Sir, you say well. You say very well. I am no honest man. But when I come stealthy believe me. Doubt me when I am open. Believe me when I am some one's enemy. Doubt me when I am every man's friend." But Colonel Stow had already made up his mind to believe, and the orders ran from troop to troop that turned the regiment away to Bablockhithe. They were off at a canter by a level bare road.

The rector, unbidden, stayed at Colonel Stow's side and Colonel Stow, noting it, had no more doubt. But his mind was exercised to guess how the Roundheads had known so well the hour to strike. There was nothing for him to do but make good speed. He



cast vedettes far out in front, and they made it, breaking to a gallop again and again, thundering on through the desert dark. Close on the first scattered houses of Stanton Harcourt he checked the pace and let his advance guard draw farther and farther away and flung out a picket up the Witney road. Then since the Roundheads could not there be found he feared they were in advance of him, and he hurried on again by the narrower, three-shadowed road through the river meadows. His first scouts had come fairly to the ford when a man thundered up from the rear to tell that the Roundheads were found. Colonel Stow laughed. "Faith, I am obliged to these gentlemen. They give me some exercise whereof my spirits are in need. It were a tame march but for their kindness," and he began to make his dispositions.

It was a heavy night, with few stars breaking the dark. Over the river and the dank grass lay a thin cloud of mist. The track to the ford was marked by trees that rose to a vast height in the vague gloom. Else all was plain level. Colonel Stow sent a party upstream to the weir. He held two squadrons close by the ford and set the rest a furlong back. Then they waited, shrouded in the mist, hearing nothing but the roar of the weir.

In a while came the convoy, most orderly. Half Colonel Budd's regiment marched in the van, half kept the rear. It was the orthodox array and Colonel Stow, with his experienced ear cocked for

the sound of their march, had not need to peer at them to know they used it. He had no more anxieties. He could trust his regiment to wait. The good Puritans came on innocently. The squadrons in front took the ford and were well in, the first files almost upon the farther bank, when Colonel Stow fired a pistol. His regiment waked with a roar. Two squadrons drove at the ford and cut off the troopers crossing from the convoy. The rest were hurled at the rear guard and, crashing at speed on the flank of men unaware, overthrew them utterly and rode them down and slew. The night was aflame and loud with pistol shots, but it was scarce a fight, for the Puritans were shattered beyond hope in the first sudden onset. The most of them were out of their saddles at the shock and never mounted again. Only the first squadrons, uncharged, unbroken, turned in the ford and set themselves stubbornly to recover the fight, but while they bore on gallantly against the beating storm of shot that only their first files could answer, sudden there was a shout from the weir and the water grew swift about them and the horses lost footing and were borne away.

There was no more hope for them. Colonel Stow kept one squadron on the river bank some while, but it had no more to do than capture a few damp Puritans that struggled to shore mightily miserable. Each man of Colonel Stow's had his work and set about it. The first of the fight was hardly over before the

weary wagon teams were strengthened with captured chargers and the convoy, wheeling into the meadows for room, was turned about and driven on to Eynsham and Oxford. Colonel Stow's men might have no faith, but they had learned their trade.

The rector of Witney had stayed close by Colonel Stow and emitted some uncanonical chuckles during the fight. "That's a Roland for old Noll. He that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him," said he. "Good night to you."

"Nay, faith, sir; ride back to Oxford and let us thank you."

"Who, I?" The rector tapped his nose. "Look 'e, I have to my parish a score of wild Anabaptists and a fair regiment of whoreson independents who are my sweet friends, and, by your leave, their friend I'll stay. For times go hard. Forget you have seen me. Disremember my name. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and I'll sow none if I can help it. There are too many." He vanished into the night and died in the odor of sanctity and his rectory ten years after.

Colonel Budd, swept away by the rush of the deepening water, reached the farther bank a hundred yards down stream. Riding back hastily, he peered across the foaming water and saw by the light of the pistol flashes that his regiment was all undone. There was nothing left but those struggling desperately with the wild stream and the Roy-

alist fire, and for them little hope. Colonel Budd yelled wildly for a trumpeter and when one came at last bade him sound the rally. The troopers heard and made for safety as they could. But it was no more than a squadron of horses and men worn to utter weariness that mustered beyond the ford.

Colonel Budd found himself looking into Colonel Royston's face. He drew his breath heavily like a man awaiting a blow. But Colonel Royston said nothing. He had no reproaches for another. He had heard the orders that conquered him ring in the voice of his friend.

Colonel Budd dug his nails into his flesh. "Ichabod!" he groaned. "Ichabod!"

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### COLONEL STOW RESOLVES TO LAUGH

IT WAS close upon dawn when Colonel Stow went back to his quarters in the Corn Market and slept doughtily. He woke in the afternoon with Prince Rupert over his bed and a hearty, "Good fortune, good fellow!" buzzing in his ears. He blinked amiably. "So you gave Noll a poke in the short ribs?" quoth the Palatine.

"Faith, he'll want a plaster this morning, sir," says Colonel Stow, sitting up.

"I'll swear it's as pretty a thing as I have known," cried the Palatine and howled for a quart of Rhenish. Colonel Stow saluted from the bedclothes. "A sweet ambush, faith. And your weir is pure poetical." The wine came and Rupert with a thunderous "*Prosit!*" drank mightily and gave the tankard to Colonel Stow. "Yes, i'gad, a sweet affair. The King shall remember you for it. But look 'e, Jerry, what a pox were the Roundheads doing there at all? They would not risk so far afield on a chance. They had an information and exact to the hour. What do you make of it?"



Colonel Stow caressed his beard and gathered his half-waked wits. There was but one of whom talk of treason could make him think. The memory of Lucinda surged back on him. He reached hastily for the tankard to hide his face and drank. . . . No, that at least was impossible. She might come to him and counsel it, but she herself could scarce go to Cromwell. . . . He put the tankard down and drew a long breath.

"What are you thinking?" said the Palatine, looking at him curiously.

"I am thinking, sir . . . that the whole affair is vastly strange. . . . If the Round-heads had gone round by Newbridge as a fool might have taught them, we had been kissing our hands to that convoy."

Rupert went off on the new hare. He drew a map on the sheet and made Colonel Stow draw another. "Ods blood, 'tis so," he cried. "The whole is a mad business indeed. What do you make of it?"

Colonel Stow shrugged. "Luck, sir. God help us all when there is no luck in war. By Your Highness' leave, I will up."

Rupert sat down on the bed as Colonel Stow got out of it and kept up a steady stream of debate and praise, which Colonel Stow answered fitfully. His mind was away. Now the stir of action was past, despair called him again and fear. And Rupert was talking of him as of Gustav Adolf or Henri IV.

His strength was gone. He had staked his life

on a cheat. Dreams were liars and hope and faith. He felt himself alone and all things mocked at him. The morrow had nothing to bring him more. He had lost what made his life. There was no more desire of deeds, no passion to use his strength. He was listless of doing. Nay, true life was done. He could be sure of himself no more. Since he was a fool for his faith in her, he was a fool to believe in himself. He had failed his own great need, to win her and keep her true. If in that, why, then in all. He was but a weakling, who cheated himself with vanity—that most contemptible man of men.

Now, with no work to hold his thought, no chance of war to quicken his blood, now first he felt the pain of his wound. The desire of all his manhood was widowed, the glad vision that had given him heart in the worst hours was changed to an ugly sprite of mockery; the happiness for which each power of him had striven desperately was torn away from his world. The very surging life of him made the pain throb keenly. He was too much a man not to suffer deep. . . .

Now, Matthieu-Marc-Luc was in some small elation. He had even expended his substance on a quart of Burgundy, a rare generosity which Alcibiade honored duly. "*Dame*," quoth Matthieu-Marc, "my soul pastures upon joy to-day."

"May it chew a glad cud to-night," says Alcibiade.

"This is the first savory fight I have tasted in England."

"Well enough," says Alcibiade, with his nose in the tankard, "like a toasted herring—no more than a shoeing horn to your dinner."

"Remark me! I do not esteem your fight by the size of it. 'Tis art, the pure art, that I love. Now, in this affair of the ford I appraise M. le Colonel as perfect."

Alcibiade shrugged. "Give me the grand style," says he. "Pound me an army and I do not mind the trouble. These little affairs are art for my lady's maid."

"You are gross, my friend. You are deaf to the finer melodies. But with me these neat actions expand my soul. I am all spiritual to-day," sighed Matthieu-Marc.

"Are you? Then come and see Molly," said Alcibiade, who had finished the wine.

"Hum! I do not think I can love her, your Molly."

"But she adores you."

Matthieu-Marc-Luc curled his moustachios. "In effect, that is a reason for staying away. I would not break the woman's heart."

"So. I believe she was right," said Alcibiade to himself.

"O no, she was not," said Matthieu-Marc. "What did she say?"

"That you were too shy for her eating, a sad,

sober soldier. Then she sighed and said 'twas pity, for you were a proper man."

Matthieu-Marc curled his moustachios more vehemently. "She has a discernment," said he. "And yet she hath none. Well, I will see her. . . . Hem! Are you coming?"

"*Corbleu!* you might like to take her alone," said Alcibiade.

"Come with me, my good friend, you will amuse her."

Alcibiade chuckled.

So they crossed the Corn Market and made for Ship Street. Molly stood behind her tiny counter as wholesomely pleasant as her own cakes. Alcibiade looked expectant at Matthieu-Marc and nudged him. Matthieu-Marc shuffled his feet and said, "Hem!" and looked angular.

"The kind gentleman has come to eat you, Molly," said Alcibiade.

"A cake would agree with him better," quoth Molly.

"My pretty," said Matthieu-Marc, with a fine bow, "your cheeks are rosy as a summer sunset."

Alcibiade supplied a liquid whistle.

"Shall I bring you fine weather, kind sir?" said Molly sweetly, leaning over to Matthieu-Marc with a smile of provocation.

"There may be storms, my dear, there might be storms," quoth Matthieu-Marc in a hurry.

Molly made the face of one about to weep. "Do

you think he really loves me?" said she in a loud whisper to Alcibiade.

"I have certainly never said so," Matthieu-Marc protested.

Alcibiade shook his head at him. "O wicked one! O breaker of hearts!"

"I have hurt no heart in my life," quoth Matthieu-Marc indignant, "save some for roasting."

"O, you are a bloody man indeed," cried Molly. "And would you have my poor heart stuffed with nasty onions?"

Matthieu-Marc put out his chest. "It is a vile taste," quoth he. "I advise a forcemeat of egg and marjoram. Nay, my dear, save for my profession I am the gentlest man alive."

"Gentle, quotha! And how many widows did you make last night?"

"My dear," said Matthieu-Marc, "'tis every good man's duty to make widows. Thus freeing poor husbands from purgatory. For myself, well, there were some half-dozen went down before me last night. I was in the humor."

Molly made eyes at him. "La, you turn me cold down my back and I love you terrible."

Matthieu-Marc recoiled. "This is unseemly," said he.

"Why shouldn't I tell 'e so?" says the artless Molly. "You ha' just swore you loved me."

"Never o' my life!" cried Matthieu-Marc in alarm.



She appealed with pathos to Alcibiade. "Did 'e not, now? You heard him."

"With both my ears," said Alcibiade readily. Then to Matthieu-Marc, "O, wickedness, old wickedness, go to!"

"You see!" cried Molly with reproach; then with sobs, "And you are all unkind indeed!"

Matthieu-Marc made the world a gesture of despair. "So be it! So be it!" he cried. "You love me. I love you. And it shall be very uncomfortable for both of us."

Molly took her red face out of her hands. She presented to Matthieu-Marc with determination one cheek, and as he came to it more delicately than 'Agag, held out her hand to Alcibiade for the wagered shilling.

"Matthieu-Marc, my dear, you will have a saving wife," said Alcibiade.

Matthieu-Marc started back from the rosy cheek vehemently and gazed with awe at Alcibiade, who laughed in no manner of encouragement.

"How you do waste my time," quoth Molly. "As if I wanted either of you."

"My pretty," cried Matthieu-Marc, "you relieve my soul."

"I never touched it," said Molly with some indignation. She considered them severely. "Lud, there's one I care for more than the both of you."

Alcibiade leaned over the counter and pressed her waist. "What! Faithless so soon!"

"Have done! How is your Colonel?"

"M. le Colonel is as well as a man can be without courting you, my pretty," said Matthieu-Marc.

But Alcibiade had grown grave. "Why do you ask, Molly?"

She made a queer answer. "Because he is a man that makes you feel safe being a woman. I could do things for him. And he would not want me." Her rosy, round face fell sad with a quaint look of childhood. "You know the big man, his friend, and her that I call the hungry one? I think they are gone away together."

After a moment of silence Matthieu-Marc struck his brow dramatically. "False Lancelot! False Guinevere!" he cried.

But Alcibiade said in a low voice, "Are you sure, Molly?"

"It was in the dark of the night before you marched out. He went off up the street with a spare horse and after I saw him riding with her down the Broad Street. They are gone together. . . . O, I could have a laugh. They'll give each other cobbler's wages. . . . But, does he know?"

"Are you sure, Molly?" said Alcibiade again.

"I could slap your fat face," cried Molly with sudden ferocity, and turned her back on him.

Alcibiade went out.

Matthieu-Marc cleared his throat and shook his head. "It is the nature of your sex, child, to be light, child, to be frail, to be false. You were made

for the shame of men. But man is greater than shame, and his soul is glorified in the shame of your treason—

“*Souvent femme varie,  
Bien fol qui s’y fie.*”

The lusty King Francois—”

“Was a fool like yourself,” Molly snapped.

Matthieu-Marc struck an attitude and set himself to stare her down. He retired in no good order.

“Go your ways, go your ways,” said Molly. “You’ll never know anything, you men. You are too clever.” Thereafter she wept, which was certainly not clever. For whom or for what she had found it hard to say.

Alcibiade made his solemn way first to Royston’s lodging, then to Lucinda’s and heard the truth again. Then—to see him would doubtless have increased the wrath of Molly—he took counsel with a pipe. And that sent him to Colonel Stow.

Colonel Stow was alone still. He met Alcibiade with tired eyes. “You may call it ill news, sir,” said Alcibiade, saluting.

“Well?”

“On the night before we marched Colonel Royston left Oxford with Mademoiselle Weston.”

Colonel Stow hesitated a moment and then laughed. “Who dares say that?”

“There is no doubt, sir.”

"It—it is not true," said Colonel Stow, and Alcibiade saw his lips tremble and his hand. Indeed, it was all too bitterly clear. He could not fight against it. The riddle was answered. There could be no more doubt. The treason came from his friend and his love. She was the mind, Royston the arm that struck at his honor. "It is not true," said Colonel Stow.

Alcibiade saluted. "It is whatever you please, sir."

Colonel Stow turned away, in a listless gesture bade Alcibiade go, and rested his head on his hand. Alcibiade walked to the window and stayed there. . . .

Colonel Stow leaned over the table, feeble and cold. It seemed that his heart was dead, his life gone out of him. This was the end. She had robbed him of all—hope and faith and love and strength. Even his friend . . . even his friend . . . He began to cry like a child and with the tears his stunned mind woke to feel again. Then he drove his teeth into his lip and twisted wrist against wrist to get an easier pain. To make his friend play traitor against him and seek his ruin, to steal his friend's heart away, sure this was a devil's work, no woman's. She had no part in life but to make men base. And he had set his life upon her. Had loved? Was it all past? Nay, the worst shame was that still he had a vile yearning for her. That—that must go at least. He could not

dare even the release of death if he loved her still.. . .

There in the falling twilight, huddled together, quivering, a desperate thing, afraid of his own fate, he drove her out of his heart for ever. Whatever might lie beyond, whatever strange meetings there, at least he would have no need of her. His soul should loathe her as now his body shuddered at the memory of her kiss. She should be nothing through all eternity, if there was an eternity to endure. So then. Death had no fear. Death could be no worse than the traitorous world. Death would spare him something at least—the scorn and the sneers, the long misery of effort when a man was sure to fail. Death. . . .

He sat up and brushed his hand over his wet eyes. There in the gloom, stiff-backed, staring out, stood Alcibiade, like a sentinel over the dying day. The hard, soldierly strength, quiet and still, appealed to him strangely. He was like a man buffeted and weary in the battle of a breaking sea, to whose smarting eyes comes through the spindrift and the spray a glimpse of dark land beyond the ravening line of foam. . . . Well. The whole world had not passed away because he was in trouble. . . . Something stood real beyond his passion and his pain. . . . Why, perhaps he was drunk with self; perhaps his mind sought mad fancies of torture, fed upon its own ill dream. Ay, faith, his very woes might be unreal, a nightmare for him



alone. He felt himself half sunk in a realm of ghastly fantasy, half away in the real world of action. . . . And still pain stung at him and shame and though it were all phantasm and cheat, his soul was chained in it. He felt. He suffered. The strength of others had no help for him. He was at war with the false spirit of life. He had no part in the peace that brought the world content. Against that he was rebel. . . . And yet was it not a coward, a weakling, that could be hurt so much? O, a man need not be ashamed to feel. Where there was life there was pain. It was a sluggish soul who had not learned that. But to fall out of the fight for a wound; to capitulate to pain; to give the strength of body and soul to a debauch of suffering; that was not worthy of a man. Your true man would yield no more to sorrow than he must. He should fight out of it. At the most, at the worst, pain and shame were fetters that bound. A man must break them and be the stronger for the combat. That should be true sight which showed him agony as a nightmare, as an evil dream and the world of endless effort clean and real. Suffering was one of the cheating shadows of life, sent to blind and daze and bewilder that a man might learn to trust himself and be strong. He must fight out of it. . . . Ay, if all else failed, he was left with the strength of his own soul. It was enough, though the spirit of the world's chance and change were false. He made head

against all. He stood strong in the darkness. He was sure. . . . The first fierce pang might come again and after the dull ache of despair. He could not vaunt himself safe. With no hope, no honor but his own to fight for, there was little joy to win. Surely in the empty hours despair would beset him again. He had not conquered yet. It was idle to boast to himself. All life might be the prey of sorrow and death bring joy. . . . Well. The better reason to fight. To defy despair were the happier way. To yield were to multiply misery, to despise himself. Nay, he must hold right on with eyes wide, with head erect. . . . It was folly, it was weakness, to wail at life. So a man confessed himself beaten, so he made defeat harder. In the last, worst hours a man should laugh. The right, unanswerable answer to the blackest malice of fate was a jest. He was greater than all tragedy who dared mock at his own. Strength and the quiet mind were linked with gaiety. Not without that could a man know himself. . . . There was, in fact, some humor in this desperate attempt to be humorous. He heard himself laugh out.

Alcibiade turned and saluted across the dark.

Colonel Stow rose up and came close to him. "Alcibiade," said he, "I never interested myself so much. And I was never less interesting. Resolve that."

"Sir," said Alcibiade, "a man should only think of himself while he has no need."

"That is not an answer," said Colonel Stow.

"No, sir. It is an impertinence. Nothing is so pertinent as an impertinence. That is life."

"You are wise to-night, Alcibiade."

Alcibiade made a gesture of despair. "Because I ought to be foolish. That is my miserable nature."

"I like your nature."

"Sir, I deplore your taste."

"I am going to borrow it."

"Sir, you will be foolish when you should be wise."

"I hope so," said Colonel Stow.

And as he spoke the trumpets sounded for the night guard.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### THE COMMISSARY GENERAL IS DISAPPOINTED

THAT morning a little before dawn a wretched, silent company had ridden into Abingdon. When they turned to the market-place Colonel Budd spoke for the first time, save for savory quotations from the Scripture, "I go straight-way to the lieutenant general, sir. I bid you come."

Colonel Royston grunted. "Bad will be no worse for sleeping on it," said he. He was worn out and dully puzzled at himself, for his great body hardly knew weariness.

Together they came to the lieutenant general's quarters. They were both ill enough to see, as they waited in the ghastly mingled light of candles and the first pale dawn. The lieutenant general himself, uncombed, unshaven, with his linen awry, was not more comely. But the commissary came neat as ever.

"Well, friend, well? Have you not sped?" quoth Cromwell.

Colonel Budd groaned aloud. "Israel is fled before the Philistines and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people," said Colonel Budd.

"Why, how now!" cried Cromwell, frowning. The commissary turned not without satisfaction upon Colonel Royston.

"'Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me,'" said Colonel Budd. "For this man hath done no wrong. Nay, verily, his counsel was as if a man had enquired of the oracle of God. The which, if I had used, the children of God were not put to confusion. I have sinned greatly. Yea, I have done very foolishly."

Cromwell banged his hand down on the table. "Make short, man, make short."

Colonel Budd muttered some solace of Scripture and began: "You are to know that all the day went prosperously. We came with no man against us safely upon the road to the west and even as this savory member did prophesy unto us, the convoy of the men of Belial came; yea, and by his devices we had the advantage of it and did possess it altogether. Then he bade us gird up our loins and be gone, but I tarried a while to do execution on the Amalekites. In the which I can not blame myself, though the Lord, Whose ways are a mystery, requited me ill."

"What, sirrah?" Cromwell thundered. "Would you judge your God?"

"My damnation is unto His glory," quoth Colonel Budd, "yet may I call it damnation. Well, sir, it was full dark before we marched and I proposed to myself the nearest road by the ford of Bablock-



hithe. Then this good brother in the Lord contended with me, yea, strove hard with me, that we should go round by the way we came, afar from the city of the Philistines. But I would not hear him. Verily, one sinner destroyeth much good, and the labor of the fool weareth every one away. So I would not harken unto him, but went by the broad road which leadeth unto destruction. And, behold, even at the ford, while the half the regiment was cumbered in the river, the Philistines fell upon us and they did undo us utterly. Whereby I bring you back no convoy and of my regiment one broken squadron. For the wrath of the Lord is kindled against me and my name shall be a hissing."

"And through thee the heathen have come into their inheritance," said Cromwell. "Truly an haughty spirit is an abomination unto the Lord."

"Sir, I am humbled, even unto the dust. I beseech you show me no mercy. For truly the Lord is a jealous God."

Cromwell beat his fingers on the table. The commissary was attentive to Colonel Royston, whose dejection interested him: "You, sir, have you anything to say?"

"It is not my humor to accuse a comrade," growled Royston. "The gentleman is a brave gentleman."

The commissary looked disappointed. "You do not accuse him neither?"

"I have answered you," growled Royston.

"You say well, friend," quoth Cromwell. "Ay, and you have done well. Your promise hath been fairly performed. You are in my remembrance. O, sir, let's not be weary in well doing. Colonel Budd, the cause of the Lord hath suffered by you. You'll face a court."

"Sir, I thank you," cried Colonel Budd. Royston saluted without a word, and they went their way.

"The Lord deliver us from fools, Henry Ireton," said Cromwell.

"That will He not in this world, sir."

"Nay, verily. And this Jacob is an ass absolute. Heard you ever such a chronicle of folly? Well. The other is a right honest, true, sturdy fellow. Would I had given him command!"

"I am disappointed," said the commissary general.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### LUCINDA IS WOODED

LUCINDA endured an impatient ennui. Of no account, friendless in a town of Puritan soldiers, she found each hour a week. Withal she panted to hear of Royston's fortune. I suppose there was always in her heart a love for Colonel Stow, and that very love made her yearn for tidings of his defeat, ay, of his death. If she had cared nothing, she could have let him go without one touch of pain. But he had sown in her a strange yearning that would not die. Still she desired him, and it was more than desire. There was that in her soul which he had waked to life and without him it was hungry. She might have laughed, I think, at his scorn, if scorn had been all his offense. But that he should dare to make her need him and deny her was a wrong that rankled and made and fed on pain. Through each weary hour she was the more enraged.

It was with no good heart that Colonel Royston came to her at last. She started from her chair. "What fortune?" she cried eagerly. "What fortune?"

"None."

"How?" Her face was dark and distorted. "You failed? You've let him laugh?"

"Him?" Royston cried and snatched her wrist. "How much did you know?"

"Ah! You are hurting me," she screamed like a child, for his hand had closed in merciless force, and struggled to escape.

"What do I care? . . . You devil, you knew it!" He wrenched her wrist round in his passion, then flung her from him so that she reeled against the wall.

She was white with pain. "You are mad, I think," she said, hardly commanding her voice. "What is it I know?"

"You knew that Jerry Stow was coming out for the convoy. You knew it was his affair. You sent me to trap him and ruin him, you damned traitress!"

"O, la, you have lost your wits," she laughed. "Of course I knew it was his. Why else should I care to destroy it? Sure, you must have guessed so much. There is no treason here."

"Why did you not tell me, then? You swore you did not know who would command for the King. Why?"

"O, because I knew you a poltroon. If you had thought you had him against you, you had not dared. I know you!"

Royston gave a queer laugh. "Are you so sure?

.. . . But, by God! I would break your back sooner than beat him."

She stood against him, quick-breathed, defiant. Her charm was greatest so. But Royston looked down at her with a small, sneering smile. "Well. 'Tis his back I have made you break," she said.

Royston shrugged. "He can do without you. And me, my dear. Do you know, sweetheart"—he laughed on the word—"when I heard him shouting to his troopers I thanked God he had us so that there was no way out."

"O, you thank God you are a fool."

"Perhaps I wish I were. You would have done without me then."

"And do you think I'll not do without you now?" she cried. "Well, tell me the tale. Let me hear what a fool you are."

Royston told; dwelling with malicious delight on the skill of Colonel Stow and the utter rout of the Puritans. "Faith, Jerry will have his laugh at us to-day, my dear."

"I hate you," she cried, and her eyes flamed and her voice was ugly. She crouched back as if she would spring upon him.

"Why, that is some relish," he laughed and approached her. "That will give me some pleasure at the wedding."

"Wedding?" She flung a shrill laugh back. "Do you think I will wed such a thing as you? I wanted a man—a man to revenge me. You—a coward that



can not strike for himself, a weakling that whines for a blow. I'll lead apes in hell before I come to your arms."

"Ay, this makes it sweeter yet," said Royston, with an evil smile. "Rage against me. I need something to breed me love."

"You—what have you to offer me? What will they give you here? The whip for a false spy, branding for the foresworn. Nay, I have done with you. O, you were no worth ever in yourself, but I thought you might win a soldier's place in this canting army. If you won power and wealth I could use them. But you—you—why, I have loved a man."

"Yes, I foresee pleasure for you," said Royston and took her in his arms.

With the strength of mad passion she hurled herself free. "Dare that again and I cry out on you for a ravisher," she panted. "O, you have nothing in you but the force of a brute. Do you think I will yield to that?"

"No. You shall ask for it," said Royston coolly. He sat himself down at his ease and bent his dark brows upon her. "Fool, I am not a man to be cheated. You bought me to be a rogue, but by God you shall pay my price. Bah, I knew you would be false if you could. Try. Tell your tale and I'll tell mine. You have left yourself no honor with the King. I'll see that you have none here," he laughed. "Will you take a high tone to

me? By Heaven, you shall beg before me before I touch you again. If I choose to leave you, what resource have you? You dare not go back to the King. All the army knows you for the treacherous light o' love you are. Will you go dwell among the yokels? Ay, till your hot ambition drives you mad. Will you try your charms on these cold Puritans? Faith, that should be mirthful. I'll commend you to Cromwell. When you end with the slashed face the godly men give a camp follower I'll provide you a pittance." She was very pale and she shuddered but still her eyes withstood him. "Ay, mistress, you have cut yourself from all but me. 'All for love,' quo' she, 'and the world well lost.' And I—well, I have sold myself cheap, but at least I will have all you can give." He leaned towards her, his full face grim and greedy. She moved her head to and fro, but her eyes could not escape his. Her lips were apart for the quick breath. "Bah, why do you play at pride? We have done with that, you and I. We are bare for each other in greed and desire. What use to feign nice dignity? I know your soul. You need my ways. Ay, even now you want me, you are leaning to my arms. Fool, do you think I can not feel it? "Come!" He held out his hand. "Come!" he cried again, his face flushing.

She looked a long while, trembling a little again and again. Then she put out her hand timidly and let it fall in his. He would not grasp it, he drew

her no nearer. She heard him laugh. A blush flooded all her face, her eyes fell. With a strange, wretched cry she flung herself into his arms. She was crushed against him, impotent, suffering. . . . for a while she knew nothing but pain. Then she cast her arms about him and clung to him passionately. "There is—there is something, isn't there?" she said through a sobbing laugh and hid her face against his shoulder. He took her chin and forced her face to his and covered her with cruel, greedy kisses . . . . She gave herself to them . . . . And then on a sudden she shrank away from him and covered her burning cheeks and shuddered . . . . She was away in the farthest reach of his arms and rent with sobs.

Royston crushed her quivering against him. "My wife," he said and laughed. "My wife!"

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### JOAN NORMANDY PLAYS PROXY

MISTRESS Joy Stone, the mayor's daughter of Thame, loved the river meadows. Thither from the hospital lodged in the grammar school, she bore Joan Normandy. A quick wind came fragrant from the limes about the churchyard, the thornbrakes were a sweet flame of white, the banks blue with speedwell. But Mistress Joy was in a great haste. They turned from the highway to the river bank and Joan hung back watching the swift, dark water. Mistress Joy snapped off a kingcup and sighed and pulled another, looked over the wide, empty meadows and sighed again. Her round, childish face was marked with a quaint gravity. "Do you like me, Joan?" said she. "Truly?"

"Why, child, who does not?"

"I am sure I can not tell why any one should," said Joy, with melancholy satisfaction. "I am very sinful indeed. Sometimes I think I am a child of wrath. And I am quite stupid. And I—would you say that I am comely, Joan?"

"I would laugh at you till you laugh too."

"I suppose one ought not to be unhappy save

concerning one's salvation. Have you ever been quite, quite unhappy, Joan?"

"In truth, child, if you were so you would not tell of it."

"I am shameful," said Joy with decision. "Dear heart, do I weary you? You are strong and noble, and I—why it is a puzzle to be a woman, you know."

"'Tis a puzzle you'll not get out of, dear. Nor want to, maybe."

"O, shall I not! Would I could change my heart and my coats, I should go the easier. Nay, but conceive me a man! Would you love me, sweet Joan?"

"Sure, sir, you are too bold," Joan laughed.

"Nay, madame, I am a good knight and kiss before I speak," she cried, and slipping her arm about Joan's waist, she did it—and sprang back as if she were stung, a pretty crimson. Close upon them was David Stow. She turned away, tugging Joan's hand. "Nay, Joan, come—come away," she whispered wildly.

"Why, you are a good knight and kiss before you speak," Joan laughed in her ear, and louder: "Good morrow, sir."

David Stow saluted. "And to you, madame." Joy still presented to him her back. "Pray convey my greeting to Mistress Stone's face."

"Major Stow would salute your face, cousin," quoth Joan.



"I thank him for it," Joy stammered.

"Sir, she thanks you for it with my lips," said Joan, her eyes gay.

"A fair proxy. Madame, will you walk?"

"Why, sir, with good will," Joan laughed and proceeded to walk away.

There was a cry of anguish. "Joan!"

David Stow arrested her. "Believe me, madame, you will be an aid."

"Sure, 'tis scarce to be believed. But with right good will, sir. Come, cousin." She linked arms with Joy, but her design to bring the two next each other was frustrated by the agility of both of them. So the three paced on over the meadows, Joan smiling in the middle, David Stow mightily grave upon her left hand, Joy hanging back out of his sight on the other. "The thrushes are gay in the sunshine," Joan suggested. They had nothing to say about the thrushes. "There is meadowsweet and may in the wind." They were not inspired by the wind. "Indeed, 'tis a fair day for you." They had no gratitude for the day. "But I can not do it all." She looked from one to the other with a whimsical smile. But her eyes stayed longer upon David Stow and the smile died.

"A man never knows how little he is worth till he thinks of himself with a woman, madame," said he with the air of a discoverer.

"It must then be a melancholy moment, sir," says Joan.

"I think a man knows little of a woman, Joan," said Joy in a low voice.

"For then"—David Stow continued his confessions to Joan—"for then he perceives how coarse and hard is man's nature, how unfit for a woman's soul."

"For which God made it," said Joan.

"Nay, madame, which of us does not know how much he falls short of the purpose of God, which designed us for happiness in His service."

"And good courage."

David Stow started and saluted like a soldier who has been chidden.

"Joan, I think it hurts sometimes when people call themselves ill," said Joy, her voice trembling.

"That is when the people are dear to us," said Joan.

"Nay, nay, not that at all," Joy cried in alarm. "But you would not have people abase themselves, would you, Joan? 'Tis like being a coward."

"Why, then, cousin, I think I heard you a coward a while ago."

David Stow made an exclamation. Joy's blushes surged and fled. "Hush, O, hush!" she gasped.

Joan obeyed . . . "Nay, then, if I am silent, what will befall you?" said she.

"Why, madame, I could tell you of one who is a coward and weak and vain withal, who yet dares hope—hope—" But he dared no more and Joy dared nothing.

Then Joan, with a quaint, tender smile, "Cousin, I have to tell you of one who dares hope."

"I—I—I—when the people of old saw God they were sore afraid. And, Joan—do you think—is't even so when we know the joy of the love that He gives?"

"I can not tell that," said Joan in a low voice. She drew her arm away and slipped back, leaving them side by side. It was at the man she looked, at his pale face, earnest and grave and glad. Then, with a strange gesture she turned and fled from them.

David Stow took Joy's hands in his and drew her close. Grave-eyed and pale and silent, she came and rested against his heart. He bowed over her, and so they stood in the sunlight, still and quiet.

But as Joan sped away to the town she looked through a mist of tears.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### LUCINDA IS WED

THE campaign was afoot. Rupert broke out of Oxford and made a swift foray across the midlands. Sir Thomas Fairfax, a man of method, bade his New Model army draw together upon Thame. So the lieutenant general set a strong post in Abingdon and moved northward.

Now, the New Model, which sought to provide itself with the newest inventions of the art of war, had got a great regiment of dragoons. There were few of the Puritans knew clearly what a dragoon ought to be or do. The commissary general, who mistrusted them profoundly, saw in them a happy way to dispose of Colonel Royston. He might, being a veteran, know how to use them. If so, well. They might, being neither fish, flesh nor good red herring, go down in a notable ruin. And that would not be all ill, either.

So it is as major of the lieutenant's dragoons, the weedy men on cobs with red coats and no armor nor helmet, but a sword and dragon apiece, that you see Royston ride into Thame. His men

were half trooper, half musketeer, and the scorn of both, but Royston liked them well enough. They were ne'er-do-wells, not saints. The strenuous, godly souls chose regiments they understood. Royston had what was left, the fellows who wanted not salvation but sport and eighteen pence a day. He understood them. With them he could make himself a place.

The world was going well with him again. He had a cynic laugh at circumstance. Honest friendship brought him nothing but ill. A nasty treason set him on the way to fortune and pleasure. For there was pleasure, keen pleasure that whipped his sense and mind, in Lucinda. Her hot passion, ay and her strength that strove fierce against him still, and the pain he saw her feel bore him a storm of delight. She was utterly desirable in her yearning and her scorn, a wild woman who longed for him and loathed him at once, made fit food for his desperate soul.

She was won now. He rode into Thame on a May morning that sparkled with frost to possess her. The mass of trees about the gray square tower were gay in their new dress, gold and white and gray as the wind played and a hundred dainty shades of green. Royston sent his men to their tents in the fields southward of the little town and strode away. Lucinda was lodged in the overhanging upper rooms of a new house by the grammar school. She kept him waiting a while, and when



she came from her bed chamber surprised him by her somberness. She was all dark gray.

"The Puritan bride, sir," quoth she with a mocking curtsy.

"Say you so? Then I pity you."

"Well." She looked at him long, then gave a reckless laugh. "O, ay, we are fit mates."

"You flatter me," said Royston, as he gave her his arm.

Together, silent, they made their way to the church, little heeded in the bustle of the gathering army. But, on a sudden, Lucinda checked and faltered. Royston, looking down, saw her face all crimson. "It is nothing. It is a faintness," she gasped, and for a moment hung heavy on his arm.

Through the throng she had seen a lilting gait that she remembered and was aware of shame. But her heart played false. She knew, she knew that it could not be he. Angry, with head erect, she went on her way. Royston had not seen.

In the doorway of the mayor's house, David Stow made way for Joan, and, turning, saw the bride. He made an exclamation. "Surely there are some there that we know," quoth he.

Joan saw and was white. "I—I do not understand," she said unsteadily.

"Nay, but I must," said David Stow, and turned from the house of his lady and went after them. And Joan followed him.

The wind was blowing free through the great

church, for the glass of its best windows had been beaten out by savory souls, zealous to destroy the works of Baal, when they rabbled the vicar. On the steps of the choir, Mr. Hugh Peters, Cromwell's warrior chaplain, awaited them in gown of Geneva and bands. Save for him the church was empty. "Gird up your loins," he cried. "You come to a godly work," and added a joke kindly enough but something broad.

Upon the mere wedding he wasted little time. It was a bluff question apiece and a hearty "I pronounce you man and wife before the living God!" Mr. Peters was not a man of ceremonies, but he valued himself as a preacher and that he had but one or two gathered together before him was never any restraint. Lucinda had to hear a history of matrimony from its origin, illuminated by the leading cases of Bathsheba, Jezebel and Henrietta Maria, which later became a homily and an exhortation on wifely duties, distinguished by solid sense rather than delicacy. It is likely that Royston was amused. There was a grim humor mingled even in his passions. But Lucinda had nothing of that and her heart was raging. That this ruddy parson should dare to school her like a milkmaid! Cherish and obey, quotha! The Lord loveth a goodly housewife! The godly rearing of children! Her eyes flamed at Mr. Peters. Her hands clenched and unclenched nervously. And Mr. Peters smiled upon her and spoke with some unction of a maid's

fears. Lucinda was hot with a wrath she scarce understood. There was a questioning wonder in the eyes that flamed. True, he was a gross, insolent fool, but that should not suffice to move her so. He promised her passion the burdens of common life, the dull daily labors of women of no account. Bah, it was ludicrous, but what matter for such anger? Why, because it filched the glamour and joy from her desires; she sought a wild reign of sensation, and he foretold her dull wifehood, the life of a slave. Service of Royston—was that to be her lot? To be spent in motherhood? She turned upon Royston with a fierce stare of hate, and seeing the placid sneer on his full lips broke out in ugly laughter.

It alarmed Mr. Peters, who, a man of charity, conceived her overwrought by the fears of maidenly modesty and his own eloquence and cut the latter short. He took them apart to sign his book (the registers of the church had vanished with the exiled vicar). "I dismiss you to joy," said he. "But let not your private joys make you sleepy in the service of the Lord."

"I'll assure they shall not," said Lucinda, and laughed again.

Royston thrust her arm through his with a masterful gesture and bore her off at a gait too fast for grace.

From behind a pillar of the nave came a neat man of middle size. Royston checked heavily with

a thud and clatter of spur and sword and a booming oath. Lucinda was struggling to be away from him. For surely it was Colonel Stow.

"Pray, sir, have you any tidings of my brother?" said David Stow.

"Good morrow and well met," said Royston heartily. "Did you know my wife when she was a maid?"

David Stow saluted. "I have heard much and heard less than the truth, I think," he said, and his grave eyes rested on Lucinda.

Lucinda made him a curtsy, and Royston, giving room for her skirts, stepped aside and saw Joan Normandy. "Ha, here is an old affection. Yes, my dear, Jerry is very well." Lucinda, starting at the tone, turned to see the girl blush to her brow. The two women gazed at each other, and Lucinda saw wonder and pity.

"I thought you and Jerry so close friends," said David Stow in grave, level tones.

"Why, friends we are still, I hope," said Royston with a laugh. "Jerry found his account with the King and I could not. Faith, sir, the more I know the King's cause the worse I like it. Jerry had another mind. But I will uphold his honesty."

"You are very good, sir."

"Well, the truth is I sought a cleaner standard, and owing no faith to the King, was free to seek. I would that Jerry were of my mind or I could be of his. Well, it is life!"

"And Mistress Royston came with you from Oxford to share it?"

"Why, madame could not endure the license of the court, and—"

"There was none to protect her?"

"There was none to whom she could give the right but me," said Royston with dignity.

David Stow looked keenly from one to the other. "I give you joy of to-day," he said and stood aside to let them pass.

Lucinda, as she swept by, saw the wonder in Joan's face blent with joy . . .

David Stow turned from watching them back to Joan. "Shall we be gone, madame?" But he saw that she did not hear, he saw her eyes. Joan was left in the great church alone.

Heavy of foot, silent, Lucinda was borne to her lodging. Royston looked down at her with a mocking smile, but he did not understand. Fear dulled her heart. She was bound by the new dread of a jealous hate. If Colonel Stow should fall to another woman's breast, if he should find happiness so, then was her fate intolerable. That Puritan girl dared love him and it might be . . . while she was Royston's toy . . .

Come to her lodging, safe in the upper room, Royston caught her greedily. Her lips were cold.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### COLONEL STOW IS SHOWN HIS DUTY

“WE go out to war, my dear,” said Matthieu-Marc.

“And you’ll come back and marry me, will ’e not?” said Molly amiably.

Matthieu-Marc coughed. “Marriage,” said he, “is a sacrament; you may also consider it a sauce. I am not sure that you are worthy the one. I am sure that you need not the other.”

Molly boxed his ears. “The truth is, you are afraid of me.”

“I fear nothing but God and an English omelette,” said Matthieu-Marc with indignation.

“Then you do not love me?” said Molly.

“I love all women—who do not love me.”

“Sure that is the whole world of them!”

Matthieu-Marc recovered his spirits. “I shall die the bachelor I was born,” said he with enthusiasm. Molly proffered her cheek. He saluted it before he swaggered out.

Then Alcibiade, who had been eating a cake in contented obscurity, approached for the like favor.

Molly withdrew. "*Parbleu*, Molly, no woman loves me neither," Alcibiade protested.

"'Tis a fool that says so."

"But would a fool want your lips?"

"No fool will ever get them," quoth Molly and withstood him earnestly.

So that he faltered in the struggle, and looking something pathetic, said, "Adieu, my dear," and went off.

"Sure, he is a fool indeed," said Molly, and left her cakes, to cry.

They had not gone far out of Oxford when the cavalry came clashing against the Puritans. Then Colonel Stow enjoyed life. One good regiment could not save the army, but his could entertain itself well in affairs of outposts. His men lacked indeed the Puritan flame, but they knew their trade now to the last letter, and in the crafty by-play of war the fanatic had no advantage.

While Sir Thomas Fairfax lay at Stony Stratford, it fell to Colonel Rich, a very fervent member, to watch the byways through Whittlewood Forest. Now Colonel Stow, schooled in the Duke of Weimar's Black Forest campaigns, had reared an uncommon kind of cavalry which was as happy in a wood as out of it. He exercised Colonel Rich marvelously, so that the good man expected the second coming sooner than ever. The seventh angel, he pointed out, had plainly poured out his vial and the woman which sat upon the scarlet beast

was already almost drunken with the blood of the saints.

Colonel Stow snapped up the Puritans here and there till there were some score and a half of melancholy prisoners locked in the barn at Brackley Hatch. One rainy dawn a couple of squadrons got past Colonel Rich altogether and fell on Skippon's quarters at Denshanger, to the extreme displeasure of that worthy martinet, who proposed that Colonel Rich should await the second coming in his grave. For Colonel Stow's men beat in a picket, blew up a stableful of powder, carried off a wagon of silver, a score of prisoners and the sergeant major's pet chaplain.

Colonel Rich explained that his name should be called Magor Missabib and that the beast was with power and seat and great authority. The lieutenant general pleaded for Colonel Rich as a vessel of righteousness and Skippon allowed himself to be appeased.

But Colonel Rich was hardly the happier. He raged through the forest with multiplied fury, though little better fortune.

The mass of the King's army had made the Watling Street and were moving away. Colonel Stow had the ordering of the rear guard. Then a half dozen of his troopers, lingering to drink in Towcester, were overwhelmed by a wild charge of Colonel Rich's men, who, pressing on, ran their heads into a neat crossfire and were greatly mishandled. Nev-

ertheless, Colonel Rich had his little convoy of prisoners and was not ill satisfied.

In the end of the day, when Colonel Stow was sitting down to food in Faster's Booth, one of his men broke in, much damaged. Scraps of his shirt were bound about his forehead and his left arm; he lurched in his walk. "You paid for that ale in Towcester," said Colonel Stow.

"By God, sir, the others be like to pay more," the man cried hoarsely. "The butcher Rich, he would hang us all at dawn."

"You are drunken still," said Colonel Stow.

"And I wish I were, for Billy Porter be one of them," said the man. "Sure, 'tis gospel, sir. When he lay up there beyond Towcester he had us parade in the farm-yard in front of him, and first he preached at us a while, and swore all the Bible down upon us, and then he bade us repent, for we should be hanged ere he marched, and the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's heel, meaning you, sir. And then he made a horrid prayer on us, and, seeing his sergeant was a-listening mighty, I made a dive at he and upset he on the muck and the others, and mostly Billy Porter, being violent, too, there was a mighty to do, but it was only me won away, for I got first to the horses, and mighty good practice they made at me, too. And I would as lief be with old Billy Porter, I am sure." He was fairly crying for weakness and strain.

"Feed him," said Colonel Stow to a sergeant. His

officers were loud and profane in indignation. "An ill game, gentlemen. We will play our hand. Captain Godfrey! You will take a trumpet and ride to Colonel Rich and acquaint him that for each man of mine so murdered, I will hang two of his. I will give you a letter. Saddle, sir. Faith, gentlemen, war would be clean enough if only soldiers fought." While the others rattled their abuse noisily, Colonel Stow sat silent and heavy with thought.

A while after he sought out his unhappy prisoners, who lay upon straw in a shed. Colonel Stow stood before them between two torch bearing troopers, a grim vision of war to their helplessness. Haggard, unshaven faces loomed white at him. "Gentlemen! I am forced to a cruelty I hate. Colonel Rich of your army hath four of my men prisoners. He swears to hang them for no offense but being his foes. This I can not suffer. I have warned Colonel Rich that if he will not observe the honor of war, I may not either. For each man of mine he murders, a man of his must die. Gentlemen, I pray God he may not put me to such extremity. But if he will—I warn you. Draw lots among yourselves. If my men die, four men of you die with the morning."

He waited lest any should seek to answer. There was none. The Puritan temper knew no fear of death. They asked no mercy. They flung no taunt either. Colonel Stow looked keenly from one to



the other; one face made him linger long. Then he saluted and turned away.

Soon his adjutant came to the stable, and picking out the parson, bade him come and speak with his colonel. Again John Normandy looked into the eyes of Colonel Stow.

"I owed you more courtesy, sir," said Colonel Stow gravely. "If I had known you were the chaplain we took, you had fared better."

"You owe me nothing," said the minister. "You served me well. I would that you had served God so."

There was a crooked smile on Colonel Stow's lips. He remembered what had chosen his cause for him. "Let it be, then. I have to speak of this matter of to-night, which, on my soul, I loathe."

"You do well," said the minister.

"O, understand me! I have no shame for what I do. If Colonel Rich would play the butcher, by butchery I must school him."

"You do well," said the minister again.

"What, sir?" Colonel Stow cried in amazement.

"Man, man, do you think the children of light have less care for righteousness than you? Are we not shamed that a leader of ours should keep no faith with the helpless? I protest to you that if Colonel Rich does this thing, there are those in the host of the Lord will take such vengeance upon him as shall cause the ears of all them that hear it to tingle."

"I hope it may be so," said Colonel Stow gravely, with no great faith. "Nevertheless, sir, I must do my part. If my men are murdered, there must be requital."

"In the name of the most high God, so let it be! Let not Israel escape the sacrifice for their sin."

"But you, sir, who are no soldier, but a minister of God, have no part in this. I do not war with priests. That is all."

"What have I then done that you should be thus tender with me?" the minister cried with some scorn.

It was some time before Colonel Stow answered. There were a thousand mingled memories of joyous devices and a ride in the springtime and hopes and laughter and virginal eyes. "I could tell you many things and no matter."

"And I will not suffer this mercy," the minister cried. "I will bear my brothers' fate. Why, what vile thing were I, who preach there is no sting in death, to shrink from it? Nay, sir, you put me to shame. If you seek to be kindly, as I think, you'll make no more of this. I know the calling wherewith I am called. Let me go comfort my brethren."

Colonel Stow rested his head on his hand and stared at the fire. "I have done what I could," he said.

The minister looked at him with a grave kindness. "I would to God that thou wert almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds," he

said. But it was not he who had the air of a prisoner.

Colonel Stow held out his hand.

"Farewell, if it be farewell," said the minister. "Verily, before the judgment seat of God, I will protest you guiltless in this matter."

Colonel Stow sat alone, looking at the failing fire. The thing moved him more than he could have believed possible. It was an old necessity of war, and, though to him as to all soldiers by trade, it bore disgust, no matter to break the heart. The minister surely disturbed him out of reason. There was no profit in thinking of the past and the girl who cried for her father. The girl . . . the clean light of her eyes held him as of old . . . And the thing would have been easier if the minister had been a lesser man. It was an impertinence of him to be admirable . . . Well, there was at least the chance that Colonel Rich would be advised.

Captain Godfrey came in from his ride, and while he fumbled for a letter, answered Colonel Stow's questioning eyes. "Moon struck, sir. Dog mad. Wolf mad." Colonel Stow opened his letter.

At Caldecote, 20th May, 1645.

Sir—Yours to hand. I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of

Kings and the flesh of captains and the flesh of mighty men."

God's will be done. I will smite and spare not and ye that bear the mark of the Beast shall be undone in your iniquity.

Let this be your answer.

The minister of the wrath of the Lord,

NEHEMIAH RICH.

"Sir, this he gave me with more blasphemy than I can remember," said Captain Godfrey. "On my soul, he is beside himself. 'Fellow,' he says, 'tomorrow about this time your brethren in iniquity shall be even as they that Rizpah bare to Saul. Go to. Look to it. Repent!' and he gnawed at his lip and it was frothy."

Colonel Stow sat pondering a while, then again he sought his prisoners. The calm murmur of talk fell as he came to them. They gazed at him from their straw, steadily through the lantern light, with no sign of trouble. "Gentlemen, I have to tell you Colonel Rich abides by his purpose. My men are to die, and four of you must make ready to die in the morning. Draw lots with yourselves."

"We have chosen," said the minister's deep voice.

"Which are they?" said Colonel Stow quickly.

"They shall be ready," said the minister.

Colonel Stow saluted. "Gentlemen, this way of war is not mine. I am sorry."

"Fear not," said the minister.

While he came again to his fireside, he heard the prisoners singing:

My table Thou hast furnished  
In presence of my foes;  
My head Thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me,  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling place shall be.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

### COLONEL RICH IS INTERRUPTED

SIR Thomas Fairfax, who was dark and ruddy and of a goodly countenance, sat at his ease after dinner. To neither was he much devoted, but enjoyed both when he could. The lieutenant general was eloquent from the other side of the fire on the right reading of Jeremiah xvi:17, and Sir Thomas Fairfax regarded him with a plaintive, reverent curiosity.

There was an interruption from Captain Vere. "A young woman asks for the general, sir."

Fairfax sat up. "With what purpose?" says he briskly.

"O, sir, godly," quoth Captain Vere. "'Tis a nurse with some petition about her father."

Fairfax sat back again. He looked pensively at his lieutenant general and weighed the two evils. "Let her come, Dick," said he.

Joan Normandy made her curtsy. Her face was worn and wan, her long gray cloak stained from the road. "If it please you, sir—" she began in a breathless hurry.

"It does not please me till you sit," said Fairfax.

and rose to set her a chair and stood before the fire looking down at her with kindly eyes.

She could not wait to thank him. "I am Jean Normandy, sir, and I follow after you to nurse the sick. My father, who is chaplain to the sergeant major general—"

"Then your father is honestly a man of God," quoth the lieutenant general. "I have heard him, sir. He is savory. Go on."

"Sir, he has been taken prisoner by the Royalists. I beseech you, give an order that he be changed against a prisoner of yours, for he is stricken in years and I fear for him in captivity. And, indeed, they say the Cavaliers are bloody men." Her voice swayed from note to note.

"Be of good courage, child," said Cromwell.

"Nay, take heart," quoth Fairfax. "They are foes, but they will not murder their prisoners, nor lay hands upon a minister of the Lord. For the rest—it shall be in charge. We will change him in the next parley."

"But now, but now!" she cried. "He is not a soldier; he is not strong to endure their hardness."

"Why," Fairfax looked at Cromwell. "We have no prisoners here in hand, I think," and Cromwell shook his head.

"Yes, indeed. Only to-day Colonel Rich took some, I heard, and I have been to him already to beg him give them for my father. But he will not. He will hang them, he says."

Fairfax stiffened. Through the full, easy, kindly face broke hard lines. "Hang? Prisoners admitted to quarter? You are certainly wrong."

"I can not be. I have come from him. He swore that he would not spare one."

"He deceives himself," said Fairfax and turned on the lieutenant general. "He is your friend, I think. Have you anything to say?"

"Sir, I would have you forget that he is friend of mine. Why, sir, this is to be like Peter that was thirsty for blood out of all season. I pray that he be not even as Peter, which presently denied his Lord."

But Fairfax was writing already:

At Towcester, Thursday.

Sir—It's reported that you have taken certain of the enemy, the which you purpose to hang. I am loath to believe it, being a thing abhorrent to Christian men. This is to command you to keep them alive. You will further send a trumpet to the enemy, requesting an exchange for Mr. Normandy, chaplain to the sergeant major general, and use zeal to effect this. Report to me early in the morning.

T. FAIRFAX.

To Colonel Nehemiah Rich.

He turned to Captain Vere. "Get to horse, Dick. Ride out quickly. This shall serve you now, child,

all we can. In truth, I thank you heartily. You have helped me stay a vile thing."

"Nay, sir, nay, 'tis I thank you, indeed." She curtsied from one to other of the two great men and was plainly in haste to be gone.

"So. Go to your rest, child. You are provided."

"Yes, indeed, sir," said she, and hurried out.

Then Fairfax turned to Cromwell. "Sir, I protest, if this be true, I will have no mercy on your Nehemiah Rich. It's a damnable thing."

"O, sir, let's not be quick to condemn. It is a godly man and a righteous, and if he stumble, it is by excess of zeal, whereof we can never have too much, seeing that the Lord's cause is in more of danger from them of Laodicea than all the heathen, yea, very principalities and powers, which are against it."

"Zeal! The Lord's cause!" cried Fairfax. "I tell you, sir, I have heard of no man butchering his prisoners but the Papist Pappenheim. Shall we learn of him? I tell you while I command this army we shall make war like Christians."

Cromwell leaned his head on his hand. "You say well, sir. I do protest you are in an honest, thriving way. Bear with me who am swayed by a carnal friendship, but do in all things approve your motions with a humble heartiness. O, sir, verily the Lord hath a poor servant in me, who put his honor second to a private kindness. In truth, I am a chief, the chief of sinners." He swayed in his

seat and bit his lip till specks of blood lay upon it and his chin.

Fairfax looked at his emotions with a patient wonder. "Why, you make too much of it," said he. "A friend is a friend, and why not care for him? But duty is duty." With which it appeared to Sir Thomas Fairfax, he had come to the conclusion of the whole matter. But the lieutenant general was still a prey to emotions. Fairfax grew weary.

There were moments when Cromwell inspired him with a vigorous suspicion. It was impossible for him to believe in passionate emotion over little matters. A gentleman who professed to be in trouble about his soul because he made a mistake in tactics, was a hypocrite to the plain mind of Sir Thomas Fairfax. A gentleman who did continually accuse himself of weakness and sin, must be an unpleasant example of the braggart. And yet—and yet—Cromwell had never failed him, had served him with a perfect faith, though he must needs know which was the better soldier of the two of them. Ay, indeed, the man was a most excellent soldier. Fairfax, who knew war thoroughly, knew no match for this hysterical fellow, with his tears and his convulsions and outpourings of the spirit. Which was certainly most strange. Stranger yet was his power over men. That a fellow who was always troubling about his own soul should understand other men utterly; that a fellow who was always



talking of his own weak fears should master sane, sturdy minds and command their devotion; these things were a mystery to Sir Thomas Fairfax. "My Lord Fairfax," said his Grace of Buckingham in later days, "saw not far beyond his noble nose but what he saw he saw clear."

Certainly Fairfax did not suspect the doings of Joan Normandy, and would have been as much surprised as ill pleased if he had seen her on her hackney pursuing his cousin Captain Vere down the Watling Street. There was indeed no great folly in it, for the outposts at Caldecote lay only a short two miles from Towcester, but Sir Thomas Fairfax had opinions upon propriety. Joan Normandy was outside all that. She had no fear while she did no wrong. She could not bear to await uncertain tidings. She had been wrought too long. It was not her temper; it was not the teaching of war to rest while others served her. All which, more modestly, she told Captain Vere, when hearing hoofs behind him, he waited for what they might bring. Captain Vere, being near her own age, chid her in fatherly style, but could scarce bid her back, or, if he did, ensure that she would obey. Moreover, they were already close upon Colonel Rich's quarters. So he brought her through the sentries and she waited anxiously in the dark of the village street while Captain Vere went to the cottage where the colonel lay.

It is idle to pretend that the zeal of Colonel Rich

was sufficient to make him well pleased at a disturbance of his first slumbers. He was in no way mollified by Fairfax's letter and snarled over it at Captain Vere. "I see well that Shimei hath been before me with the general that I might be put to shame. Young man, be admonished. Evil men understand not judgment, but they that seek the Lord understand all things."

"I understand the general requires you to obey in haste, sir."

"How now! Shall I be taught by a child? Verily, if a ruler harken to lies, all his servants are wicked."

"Am I to take that answer back, sir?"

"Nay, go to. I will see to it in the morning."

"Now is late enough," quoth Captain Vere.

Colonel Rich exploded in an allocution out of Jeremiah. Its full force was broken by pistol shots. Captain Vere ran out in a hurry.

"What is it? What does he answer? What will he do?" cried Joan Normandy.

But Captain Vere was not concerned for his errand or her. He stood with one foot in the stirrup, looking either way of the night. From either way came the swift thunder of horsemen, and Colonel Rich's troopers, half-dressed, half-armed, half-waked, were running to and fro, seeking their tethered unsaddled chargers. There was no time.

Colonel Stow, meditating over his fire at Faster's Booth, had been inspired by the twenty-third psalm.

Since his prisoners could take heart of that in their peril, it did not become him to surrender to fate. If they could endure with good heart, he must have good heart to act. He could not take back his word. For his men's death the Puritans must die. So much he owed to the regiment and the cause. But there might be a better way. It was a chance. But all war and life walked on the edge of chance. It was more than a cool head would dare. But the Puritan temper had struck fire from his. They should not show a stronger courage than he. Mr. Normandy should find that he possessed a soul, too.

He sent for Captain Godfrey and the man who had escaped, and hammered out of them all they knew of Colonel Rich's quarters. Then he took two squadrons.

You see them through flickering moonbeams, a long clattering line, ride by the Watling Street, where, straight as an arrow, treeless and white, it drives across the high ground. A keen wind beat at their faces. The moonlight flashed out and was swiftly hidden behind scurrying clouds; now they were in deep blue shadow, now bold against silvery light. It was a night to mock men's eyes.

When a black gulf before them marked the fall of the land to the Tove Valley they were halted and split in half. Colonel Stow had a quick parley with Sedley, the best of his captains, and himself led the first squadron away by the open turf to the

right. A little while after, the sentries of Colonel Rich to the rearward, on the Towcester Road, where they feared nothing, were suddenly overwhelmed by a storm of horsemen, and while the night guard hurried to their aid, a second squadron fell upon the outposts of the other side and all defense was beaten in. The half-waked Puritans ran hither and thither, helpless, and Colonel Stow's troopers stormed through the village, riding them down. Colonel Stow understood the affair. The first mark of his men was the Puritans' horses. In few moments they had found the horse lines and the horses were cut loose and driven off in a wild mob. The rest was easy. The Puritans, unarmed for fighting afoot, taken unaware, had no chance to stand and were broken to dust.

With the first wild charge down the village street Joan Normandy was whirled away and flung headlong. Even as she fell she heard a deep voiced roar above her: "Open out! Files! Open out!" What next she knew was waking to pain, dizzy with a hissing in her ears. . . . She was on horseback in a man's arms. His hand brushed the dust from her hair. A pale face bent to her, a face she knew . . . She cried out like a child in fear and tried to start away. But she was held fast. He took no more heed of her. She saw him looking all ways. Then he signed to a man at his elbow and a trumpet blared. Swiftly troopers began to rally about them. A man thrust through them

with authority. "I have all the rascals, sir," and she caught a glimpse of some fellows afoot.

"I'll promise them tribulation," said Colonel Stow. And he signed again to the trumpeter.

The street was full of troopers now, and sharp orders rang down the column. Soon they were upon the march again, moving swiftly through the night before a strong rearguard.

Colonel Stow bent over her. She saw again the earnest joy of those dark eyes and her heart changed its beat. "This is a fairer prisoner than I thought for," said he, and his voice was glad.

"Why?" she asked quickly, and blushed and felt his arm about her and throbbed with shame. "Ah, was it you who took my father?"

"Even I," said Colonel Stow. He laughed. "And by my soul, I am not sorry for it now."

"Why is that?"

"My dear, he has made me admire myself to-night." Colonel Stow looked down at her with a whimsical smile, awaiting her righteous wrath at levity.

But the first small puzzled frown was quickly gone. She gave a long happy sigh. Through the changing moonlight he saw the calm of her white face. "I am sure he is safe," she murmured.

"And how art sure?"

"You do not know much of yourself," said the girl, and her voice was slow with weariness. Then







he felt her stay herself more easily against him. Her eyes closed.

Colonel Stow was aware of a strange tenderness as for a child. He drew his cloak about her. Shrouded in it, she lay warm on his breast, hidden, save for the round white cheek. So they rode on at an easy pace and she slept in his arms.

The wind was falling as they climbed to the hills. The moon sank out of sight. The dark stillness of the foredawn came over all. It was cold and they rode on, cloaked by a thin mist, like ghosts making homeward before the day. The men were something weary and there was little talk. Only sometimes a murmur of laughter mingled with the dull rattle of the march.

Colonel Stow hardly knew himself. He rested in strange calm. There was no vivid feeling in him nor thought. Keen desire of the morrow's fortune was gone. The eager mind sought no more into what might be. He possessed the present, and it sufficed. It gave him, indeed, no all-conquering joy. Once, in a ride through the night, he had known the wild beat of passionate life. That was past. Only he was greatly content.

While the houses loomed up before him, while the column drew rein and broke, a line of gold flamed across the gloom of the eastern sky. Soft light grew about them and horses and men moved in it vague and vast. With the changing sound and

movement Joan Normandy woke and her misty eyes questioned.

"'Tis the dawn, child," said Colonel Stow.

"O—the dawn—" she looked vaguely about her; then her eyes came back to his.

Colonel Stow swung down and carried her into his quarters. "Indeed, I can walk," she said, stirring in his arms, but he took no heed and she gave him his way. He set her down in that chair by the fire from which he had faced her father and stood over her. It was strange to him that she asked nothing. Her gray eyes were intent upon him.

"I will fetch your father, child."

"Yes."

Colonel Stow went out. A sergeant was sent on the errand. In the mellow light he met the minister eye to eye.

"It is dawn, sir. We are ready," said the minister calmly.

Colonel Stow was some while in speaking. "There is no need. I have found a better way. Sir, Colonel Rich will murder no men of mine. I have rescued them all, and Colonel Rich's regiment is broken."

"Verily, the Lord reigneth. He is clothed with majesty," cried the minister. "O, sir, you have removed our reproach. You have been His instrument to-night to chasten them that dared do evil in His name."

"Sir, the best is that you are safe. I will ask one thing of you now. Ride to General Fairfax with

a letter from me to tell him Colonel Rich's manner of war and give him your own tidings of that you know."

"I will do it heartily. Nay, then, but is not this a cunning way to do me a kindness?"

"And if it were! Why, may I do nothing for you? But in truth, sir, consider, for the honor of your own cause as for the safety of my men, it is fit he hear the truth from one he can trust."

"You say well. O, sir, you are too good a man for your cause. The Lord needs such as you. Nay, but who am I to judge? It may be He has His work for you here."

"Which of us sees clear?" said Colonel Stow, and there was some bitterness in his tone. "But I have more tidings, sir. With what purpose, God knows, but I found your daughter in our surprise of Colonel Rich, and to save her from worse, brought her here. She is not hurt."

"My daughter?" the minister gasped in astonishment.

"Come and see."

The girl rested at her ease. Her cloak was put off and the gentle light revealed the dainty fulness of her womanhood. She had tried to set some order in her hair, but it was wayward still, a wild cloud of gold. Life had come to her round cheeks again. Her dark eyes told of peace. Her bosom swayed slow.

Colonel Stow stood with his hand clenching upon



the door while he looked and her father passed before him.

She started up, dawn breaking in her eyes. She was in her father's arms. "Sweet heart," he said, and his voice shook. "Sweet heart." She hid her face in his shoulder. "Why, and how came you here?"

"I am his prisoner," she murmured.

"But what gave you to his hands? You were not seeking to be a prisoner, sweet heart?"

She gave a strange little wild laugh. Then she looked up, thrusting the hair from her brow. "No, no truly. I was trying for you," and she told the story of her night. "And you—why, I suppose you were safe all the while, since 'twas Colonel Stow."

The minister turned to Colonel Stow, who stood by grave and pale. Colonel Stow made a gesture. "Tell her."

"I fell into the hands of a true man, child," said her father, caressing her hair.

The girl smiled, and trembling a little, held out her hand to Colonel Stow. He looked down at her grave and intent and under his eyes she began to blush. His brow darkened, too. He took her hand, and bowing, held his lips to it long.

"That at least—I have that," he muttered. Then with calm precision, "You must need rest, as we do all. Make these quarters yours. Before noon, I must send you back to General Fairfax." He saluted and was gone.

The minister, looking down at his daughter, saw her eyes grow dull and weariness draw over all her face. "Nay, you are worn out, child," he said, and led her to the settle.

"I do not know," she said listlessly.

He made her lie down with her cloak rolled for a pillow, and himself went out to take the good news to his fellows. But her cheeks were wet before she slept.

An hour before noon the minister came to wake her. She rose with misty, dreamful eyes. "What is it?" she murmured. "Yes, I remember" . . . The noise of the mustering regiment was borne through the window. . . . "Where is he?"

"Child, he sets me free and you, nay, and hath given me two of my friends to be our guard back to the army."

"Is that all?" she said.

"Why, what more could we ask or hope? Verily, he hath been most generous unto us."

"O, yes," said the girl, and laughed a little. "O, yes."

Her hood was close drawn over her eyes as they rode away. She did not see Colonel Stow with his sword at the salute.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

### THE KING TURNS

WITH his kerchief tight about his arm and a bloody scrap of his shirt bound over his forehead, Captain Vere came back to Sir Thomas Fairfax. He had hardly told his tale, amid exclamations from the lieutenant general, before Colonel Rich was announced, who entered with rolling eyes, crying, "Sharp arrows of the mighty! Yea, very coals of juniper! O, my threshing and the corn of my floor!"

"Stop your fooling," the lieutenant general thundered. "Make your excuse!"

"I find, sirrah, you have your deserts?" quoth Fairfax.

"Yea, verily, I have lien among the pots. The earth mourneth and fadeth away. The inhabitants thereof—"

"Where is your regiment?"

"Even as chaff from the threshing floor which—"

Fairfax raised his voice. "Guard! Guard!" and when the sergeant came in a hurry, "Take his sword, take him away."

"Break their teeth, O God!" Colonel Rich ejaculated and was hurried out.

"Look to your hurts, Dick," said Fairfax to his nephew, and when he, too, was gone turned to Cromwell. "So much for zeal!"

"You have me upon the hip, sir."

And seeking a cool head, troubled by no godly fervor, they pitched upon Colonel Royston and sent him with his dragoons to the outposts, and slept sound. Truly, in the two armies they could hardly have found a man less fanatic or more devoted to the right rules of war.

On the next day the minister came with this letter:

To the Right Honorable Sir Thomas Fairfax, General of the Army of the Parliament:

At Faster's Booth, Thursday.

Sir—There is in your army a Colonel Rich, which, taking my men prisoners in open fight, threatened after to hang them. To which I answered I would hang him two for one. I have not been constrained to this, having broken Colonel Rich to-night. This is to advise you that if others of your commanders attempt the like, we shall answer them according to the custom of war, but I have no fear that Sir Thomas Fairfax will put us to such necessity.

Your Excellency's servant,

J. STOW.

Then the minister told his tale, and Sir Thomas Fairfax swore and was not reproved. "By God, sir, the man outdoes us on all counts!" he cried. "We are dunces to him in tactics and in chivalry. Who is he, this J. Stow?"

And the minister told what he knew.

"Faith, I am heartily sorry for him. It must be gall to a good soldier to stomach the King's strategies." Fairfax laughed grim. "And I could use a score of him. Why could he not come to us?"

"Sir, I was granted enlightenment in last night's watches. The Lord designs true men to fight against His cause lest we that be His champions should sink in the wanton pride of our own natural sin."

Fairfax clapped him on the shoulder. "By my soul, sir, it is a refreshment to hear a preacher declare a man honest who will not listen to him. So this J. Stow was a friend once of our Colonel Royston, eh? And we have matched friend for friend. There should be some pretty fighting in that."

"Colonel Royston hath gone something beyond me," said the minister. His simplicity could not explain the wife.

But fighting between the friends there was none. The King's army was hurried suddenly out of reach. Rupert had his own way for nearly three days and made as far northward as he could. His hope lay in the border counties, where the men were a hundred years or more behind the south and east, were still half soldiers in their daily life and thought



a Puritan mad. He had not come much beyond Daventry when my Lord Digby brought forth a new plan as clear as Euclid and the King listened and tarried. The Eastern Counties, said my Lord Digby, were the great magazine of Puritan strength. To take that magazine was to strike the Puritans with palsy. Why, then, it was plain the army must march eastward at once. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

So the campaign was changed and Rupert swore to the King's face they would all be damned for it and got nearly to blows with my Lord Digby and went off to drink himself drunk. The thing was plain folly to a soldier's eye, no less than driving a weak army against the strongest rampart of the foe. Not Cæsar himself could have snatched success out of it. Rupert did not try. He threw up the game. He surrendered to despair. The army was let go its own way, and soon was a mere scattered horde of brigands. The ingenious Digby had no power to control the reckless troopers, and Rupert sulked and soaked in his tent.

Tidings of it came to Fairfax and he made what haste he could. He might have flung his cavalry at the midst of the thin cloud of the foe and ended it with one charge. But he could hardly believe that the army was as ill ordered as his spies said, and he came cautiously. He had met Rupert fighting before, and he lingered for more strength. But at last, as Rupert sat by his wine in a tavern of

Daventry, the news came that the Puritan outposts were close in sight. He roused himself from the kindly stupor that eased the pain of his despair, and set men galloping with fierce orders to draw the army together.

He was in time. The best of the scattered regiments could still obey him, and they mustered, heavy with spoil, in the old fortress of turf that crowns Borough Hill. The King was brought from his hawking in Fawsley Park, and with the Puritan full in sight and the peril of battle instant, Rupert had his way with him. They should march north again. It was the last chance, for they were outnumbered nearly two to one. So they made off by Market Harborough. But Fairfax was following hard.

In the twilight of a summer's evening, Ireton dashed into the village of Naseby and caught a score of Rupert's horsemen at ease in their inn. By midnight Rupert knew that their vanguard was upon him. There was no choice but to fight.

It was over high ground, treeless, broken with furze and rabbit holes, that the battle was set in the morning. The Puritans were posted upon a hill whose long open slope should spend the force of the fiercest horsemen. Their footmen were hidden behind the brow; their horsemen were upon either wing. In the like order, pikemen and musketeers in the midst, Rupert's horse on the right, Sir Marmaduke Langdale's on the left, the royal army came

on. But the King lingered with a reserve of horse and foot some way behind the chance of battle.

No man ever denied the Cavaliers a relish for fight. They came with good heart enough, steadfastly, like a moving wall of men, blue and green and white, pointed with a gray gleam of steel, and as they marched on with the wind that held their banners straight against the foe, the Puritans came forward over the brow of the hill a sturdy block of scarlet. They were singing:

I in the Lord do put my trust;  
How is it, then, that ye  
Say to my soul, Flee as a bird  
Unto your mountains high?

For, lo, the wicked bend their bow,  
Their shafts on string they fit,  
That those who upright are in heart,  
They privily may hit.

Then Rupert, away on the right in his red montero cap, very sparkish as was his habit in battle, set his horsemen to the trot, and with a thunderous roar of "Queen Marie!" they charged.

The June sunshine was broken with dense white clouds. The earth quaked to the boom of the guns. But Fairfax had no faith in his raw artillerymen, and he was right. The guns' target was the skylarks, and the Royalist footmen were within musket range before they had much to endure.

Rupert fell upon the Puritan horsemen where Ireton, the commissary general, had command, and to say truth had not his men in hand. For some regiments broke ground to meet the Cavaliers and fired too soon; some hung back, and Rupert, coming on at the best of his speed with squadrons locked knee to knee, crashed upon them in one mass, with one storm of pistol shots, and broke them utterly and hurled on in the chase. He was over the hill crest with the Puritans in wild rout before him; he was drunk with the spirit of the charge and mad himself as the wildest trooper, as the youngest horse, and he sped on after the rout careless of the main battle.

Soon all his men were scattered, ranging wide over the moor in a hundred little forays. Here and there a colonel cried the rally and trumpets blared, but the most of them took no heed. Colonel Stow got a grip of the best of his squadrons. "By my faith, gentlemen, this is the way to lose battles," said he, and they formed again, and resting their blown horses, came slowly back to the main battle. Not without pain. There was a long hedge, parting the moor from tilled fields. While Rupert surged by, Colonel Royston, whose dragoons, ill mounted little men, could not stand the shock of a charge, took ground there, and the bushes were lined with shot. As the Cavaliers came back, they were taken by a flank fire.

Upon the other wing the Puritans had been hap-

pier. Cromwell held his troopers till Sir Marmaduke Langdale's horsemen were weary with toiling up hill, then crashed down on them and in one sharp shock broke all their strength. The charge was hardly won before his trumpets were sounding the recall and the sternly schooled troopers turned from executing the enemies of the Lord to form upon their standards. Three regiments Cromwell spared to press the pursuit; with the rest he turned to the main battle.

There was a mad *mêlée*. The King's musketeers advancing had waited to fire but one volley before they fell on with sword and butt. They charged with the pikemen and the lines were locked in conflict. With blind hacking and hewing, with sheer thrusting, breast upon breast in the press, the reeking, panting companies strove, and the fortune of the fight swayed to and fro. In the full of the gay June sunshine they were wrapped with an acrid cloud of powder smoke and dust and the reeling standards rose out of it weirdly. Skippon was struck down in the midst. The left of the Puritans gave round and there the King's men flung themselves upon the second line. If Rupert had been at hand, Naseby fight could have had another end. But for Rupert, there were only the few squadrons with Colonel Stow, and though they charged their best, they were not weight enough to turn the issue. While they drew off, weary and spent, Colonel Royston mounted his dragoons and ventured them upon



the broken ranks. They made no bad charge of it, and Colonel Stow brought only a remnant to where the King lingered with the reserve.

Before that Cromwell had come upon the infantry. Hardly supporting an equal fight, the King's men were in no case to bear the shock of a hundred score Ironside troopers. Through the wall of pikes before them they could not break. Against the swarm of heavy horsemen they could not stand. They were smitten like corn under the scythe. Whole regiments were struck with panic and cast down their arms and screamed for quarter, until but one stood unbroken. Then Fairfax, who had hacked and hewed like a common trooper all the fight through, came with his regiment upon their front. Cromwell charged them from the rear. The sturdy ranks went down in ruin. The army was all undone. The King had no footmen left.

And Rupert? Rupert's horsemen were overspread half a dozen miles, each little party hunting its own prey. Rupert himself, with not much more than a troop, bore down on Naseby village a mile away, where Fairfax's train of baggage waited. Then the captain of the baggage guard, seeing one in habit like the general, in a red montero, as the general had, took him for Fairfax, and rode out to ask the fortune of the day. "So well that I'll give you quarter," cried Rupert. The Puritan with an objurcation out of scripture galloped back to his men and they welcomed Rupert with a volley. He

had not enough men to hand for a charge. So at last he drew rein and thought of a rally. It was a life too late. When his horsemen began to straggle back into the battle there was but one army left.

And the King? When Cromwell turned upon the footmen, the King had still his reserves to cast into the fight, had still the squadrons that had won back with Colonel Stow, shattered but daring yet. There was more than one man about him who cried with Colonel Stow, "Charge, sir, i' God's name, charge for your cause!" and the little brigade was ready. King Charles rode out to share their desperate fortune, to dare for his own doom. But as he came, he saw on the hill above Cromwell's troopers storm deathly in the charge, and he faltered. Then a faithful courtier, my Lord Carnwath, snatched his bridle, crying, "Will you go to your death?" and the King, whose army was smitten before his eyes, gave himself to a savior. "Files by the right!" cried my Lord Carnwath, and the King's guard bore him away.

Colonel Stow looked after him with a crooked smile. "There goes the worst friend the King ever had," he said.

So through the fall of that summer day the King rode hard in flight, and behind him men who cared more for his honor than he, spent themselves to save him. While the King, scathless of any mark of fight, sat down to dine in Leicester, some few scattered troops of his horse turned and turned again in des-

perate charge to stay the surge of Cromwell's pursuit. Utterly weary, bleeding and out of heart, they hurled themselves upon the Ironside ranks, desperate in their soldierly honor as the Puritans in their faith. They did their part. They saved their King while they cursed him. But when night fell there was hardly a man of them could call to his fellow.

Reeling in the saddle of a stumbling horse, Colonel Stow drew rein in the dark. He had no man left to company him. All his regiment were spent and dead. He staggered to the shelter of a hedge and lay with the blood stiff upon his wounds.

In a comfortable chamber at Loughborough, King Charles wrote a letter to his wife complaining of the conduct of his army.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

### LUCINDA IS AGAIN AN INSPIRATION

**S**LOWLY, by devious roads, the King and his guard won back to Oxford. Thither, difficultly, came a thousand or two of desperate, broken men, and a while after, the bulk of Rupert's horse. Sir Thomas Fairfax concentrated upon Thame, and made ready for a siege. Save in the very clash of battle, he was always leisurely. In truth there was little need of haste. The war was fought and lost. The end was sure. Only a few ingenious minds, like my Lord Digby, could think other. And no men ever called Sir Thomas Fairfax ingenious.

Colonel Royston was in a thriving way. He came out of the battle with no small repute and from the pursuit with no small fortune. He had a Croat's nose for plunder. The Royalists had bled the midland towns white, and Colonel Royston took the profit of it.

But he came back to win small thanks of Lucinda. She endured him and she made him suffer. He could always conquer her in a storm of passion. She could always make him smart with her con-

tempt. "Ha, madame wife, do I not content you?" he cried as he held her white in his arms.

"What is there in you to content a woman?" she panted.

That was the key of their marriage. If it be victory to make a man despise himself, Lucinda conquered. In his heart he knew that he had sold himself cheap. He had given honor and the quiet mind for a gust of pleasure like a weak girl. But that was the lesser pain. It irked most that he could not subdue her, that he could not make her do him service or respect. She dared treat him as a man of no manhood, and she could have done nothing to sting his fierce heart more keenly. But she got little joy of it. She was not, indeed, of the women who can feel shame. Her will, her passion of self, was too strong for her to convict herself of any evil. She could have sunk to the coarsest sins and known no remorse. Her desires ever held her absolved. But she had failed of the keenest passion of her life, and it gnawed still at her heart. To the end, I think, she loved Colonel Stow after her fashion. When she was crushed helpless in Royston's arms, all her being ached and throbbed for that first lost caress. She, too, had her reward.

It was on a thunderous July afternoon that Royston strode into their lodging in Thame, with a "Well, wife," (that was the name that hurt her most) "I am the lieutenant general's dear brother in Christ."



"And that is all you are like to be," said Lucinda.

"What more of a husband could you want?"

"I wonder what less I could have," she laughed.

"You take your blunder with an ill grace, madame wife."

"O, content you. I like to be your mirror. You writhe when you see yourself. It is only then you please me."

Royston broke an oath at her. "By God, what I am you have made me." She leaned her chin on her hand and looked at him with steady, scornful eyes. "And what more do you want?" he cried. "You came to me greedy with desire. You have had your fill of that. You lack nothing of rich eating and soft lying. They are my jewels on your bosom. You have no soul for more. What more are you worth?"

She laughed. "O, I knew you were brute when I ventured with you, but I thought you brute enough to be a master of others. And what are you? Bah, there is no force in you. You are of the herd that follow the bell wether. You are but one of a score of crop-eared, canting knaves, a common thing to be tossed aside when the war is done."

"I am not so easily set aside, madame," said Royston, glowering at her. "You should know that. And mark you, there be scarce two men in this army can hope for better than I. Fairfax is a spent shot—a good drill master, a good squadron captain, no

more. The man with a grip is the lieutenant general, and his day is dawning now. There is but Ireton stands as well with him as I—”

“O, yes, you were born for an underling,” cried Lucinda. “Good fellow, ambition no more and you shall attain.”

Royston glowered at her and she laughed. He strode to her and gripped her shoulder in his dark hand. She looked up at him with steady eyes, but the laugh froze on her lips. He snatched her from her chair and crushed her to his breast. “By Heaven,” he said thickly, “if I am an underling, you shall be lower still.” He held her so till she was fighting for breath, then set her roughly down and strode out. . . . She heard the harsh ring of his laugh.

So they lived.

It was some while later, when the army was ready to close upon Oxford, that a stranger came to her in the twilight. He was peacefully attired, like a comfortable trader, but he had something of a swagger. Lucinda saw a dark, lean, scarred face. “Ha, Madame Weston,” says he lightly. “To-day to thee, to-morrow to me.”

“You mistake me, sir,” said Lucinda coldly.

“Not I, madame. I am of your own tribe—a bird of prey.”

“You are an insolent, sir,” and she rose.

“O, madame, do me reason. I would make you

phrases if I despised you. I think you are strong enough for the truth."

She hesitated and was lost. "What do you want of me, sir?"

Colonel Strozzi sat down at his ease. "What do you want most in the world? I'll give it you at a price."

Lucinda laughed. "So will the devil, they say."

"Strozzi sells cheaper."

"And what is your price, sir?"

"Your *bel ami*, Colonel Royston."

Lucinda looked at him curiously. "I think you can not know, sir, that I am Colonel Royston's wife."

"O, has he married you?" said Strozzi with plain surprise. "I suppose they have prejudices here." He looked at her with a grim smile. "Which most requires my sympathy, madame?"

"You are impudent, sir."

"It is not my profession to be decent, madame. Well—though you are his wife, I can believe you command him"—he looked her lithe form over with an insolent, appraising eye, and laughed—"that is all I want."

"And what do you want of him?"

Colonel Strozzi smiled and tapped his teeth. "I can pay," he said. "Nor we'll not quarrel for the figure, neither."

"O, you are vague as Grantorto in the romance."

"A woman of your habit might drink deep of

life for a five thousand pound." He watched her keenly.

But she laughed. "And a man of your habit sell himself for a tester. What then?"

"Why, madame, your virtuous husband is trusted. So he is worth a price. He commands the dragooners and they have the outposts. His price, you may say, is doubled. O, I am frank with you." Tapping his teeth again, he watched her from under level eyebrows.

"Then, go on," said Lucinda, her eyes glistening, a smile about her lips.

Strozzi considered some while first. "My dear, if you were a man I might be afraid of you."

"Believe me, you have more reason now," Lucinda laughed.

"Not a whit, pretty one. A woman is cheap steel. You can not bear the edge of a man. You go to flinders at a hard parry."

"Try!"

"I do not need. Your profit is with me, and you'll know it." He laughed. "Faith, what a team we had made together, you and I. Fit for the devil's own driving!"

"O, sir, you do me too much honor. Nor he nor another drives me."

Strozzi grinned. "I would try my own hand for a crown. But this is woman's folly. To my affair now. Madame, this army of yours has too good generals. We could do well without them. There

must be times when they meet together o' nights for a council. All we want of your *bel ami*, is to let a company of honest men through his outposts. And it is worth—ah—it is worth a five thousand pound."

"Then it is not worth while," said Lucinda.

"Is it not? Think of it." Colonel Strozzi rose. "I will wait on you in the morning. You'll need a night to work on my dear Royston. I kiss your hands and your feet." And he was gone.

Lucinda sat in the deepening dark, curled together, thinking. Colonel Strozzi did her wrong. Her mind outmatched his. . . .

Royston came in with a clatter and shouted for lights. She stirred in her chair. "What, wife!" he groped for her, gave her a careless kiss and felt her lips answer. "How now? Here is tender devotion! Have you the vapors, madame?"

"I think you are a boor in grain. And yet, good lack, I like you."

"I know. It is my chief shame. Ha!" the candles came and they were both dazzled. "We are creatures of darkness, madame wife."

She laughed. "I'll lighten yours, sir," and she started up and stood, her hands behind her, leaning a little towards him, a vivid temptation.

Royston folded his arms. "Do you think I was made to fall?"

"No, I was," she said softly, and softly stole to him and put her arms about his great strength and nestled against him.



"What do you want?" said Royston roughly.

"You!" she whispered and laughed. "Yes, you as you will be! O, I have ached that you should rest one of the herd. But the chance has come now. Great things! Ah, I have trusted you with all I am. Is it not?" Her fingers closed nervously on his.

"Prithee, madame, be less romantic."

"O, I can be clear as your head. So, sir—" she thrust him daintily back to a chair and set herself over against him. "Admire me!"

"I never engaged to that."

"The more pleasure to make you. Well, I have had a visitor."

"I am not jealous, madame."

"A fascinating fellow, one Strozzi." Colonel Royston straightened his back. "He has the good taste to want you, sir."

Royston laughed. "Faith, madame, you are too prolific. One treason may pay; twins never did."

"Have I spoken of treason?"

"You spoke of Strozzi. He has corrupted half Europe. And would corrupt you, too, if it were not done already. By Heaven, madame, if you have mixed my name in any disloyalty, I will denounce you like a common spy."

"O, sir, I was sure of your affection. Nevertheless, you'll hear me out. He amused me, your friend Strozzi."

Royston shrugged. "Birds of a feather."

"You know me better than that," and she laughed. "I am something more than Colonel Strozzi. I think we may surprise him, you and I."

"Go on with your surprises, madame."

"Why, sir, he talked of a five thousand. And I think he would come to more than that."

Colonel Royston put up his eyebrows. Money was four times more worth then than now. It was in his nature to love it for its own sake as well as for power. "This is some notable villainy," said he, and she watched his eyes.

"I do not know if I saw it all the way," said Lucinda slowly. "But I am not sure it is your profit to serve him."

"What! Madame Lucinda virtuous?"

"O, sir, Madame Lucinda is not a fool. Hark you, then, here is his offer. On a night when the generals hold a council, make it safe for a party to come through the outposts and slay them. For which he will pay his five thousand pound, or more, as I think. I had not thought it worth so much."

"Strozzi would not show you his whole hand, my dear," said Royston with a laugh, and chin on hand meditated. . . . "Humph, it can be no great mystery. With Cromwell and old Skippon down, we should make an ill show against a strong camisado. And the King has men enough to make one still. We stamped his footmen out at Naseby, but the best of his horse won away. That will be the design. Strozzi and a batch of bravos put the

generals down. Then Rupert breaks his horse on us. By God, we should be rabble. He would ride over us."

"Is it worth a five thousand pound?" said Lucinda quietly.

Royston, staring at her, rose heavily and began to pace the room. She watched him close and keen. She misprized him, as Strozzi had misprized her. He saw the whole chance of the affair in a moment. With the five thousand—and there might be more in it with care—he could make a brave figure in half a score of countries. The thing was easy enough to do. He could manage it so that there should be no suspicion of him. Was it ugly? Was it too dirty for a soldier? Ay, a year ago he could have answered that . . . Lucinda heard him laugh. It seemed a little late for foibles. He had been false to the only clean affection of his life. He had no more pride in honor. He had nothing left to follow but greed. And for what men said—why, Walter Butler, Judas of the man that made him, ruffled it with the best at Vienna. So, then, suppose it done, and Rupert's horsemen driving the Puritans like sheep. What remained for Colonel Royston in the rout? He had seen too much, he knew men too well, to believe the war might be ended so. One night of murder would not tame the Puritan temper. The struggle would go on even through despair. In the wild turmoil of it, what a chance for a man who could lead! Nay—

He checked suddenly. He saw the vivid light in Lucinda's eyes that dwelt on him. He strode to her and laid a rough hand on her shoulder. "Madame wife, what was your design?"

"I had thought your Strozzi might serve us."

"Ay, you would be of the devil's side. How?"

"By cheating himself, sir," said Lucinda and laughed. "O, you are not very clever, you soldiers. Shall I ever make you great, I wonder?"

"Ay, in hell. Speak out!"

"Why, then," her voice was low and happy, her eyes shone delight. "Let Colonel Strozzi come and kill. What hinders for you to come down on Colonel Strozzi? The generals are slain, but you have avenged them. There is an attack, but you have beat it off. You are left the best general in all the army, you with fame and power and something of money withal. Sure, sir, this Strozzi is a kindly gentleman."

"And you are the devil's daughter," said Royston with a grim smile. Then he rested his head on his hand and stared at the ground and she heard him muttering. . . . Do him justice. It was not the design for a man of little soul. There was something of devilish courage in it, and the confidence of the strong. By the tolerant ethic of his day and his trade, the thing was less vile far than to this nice age of peace. It was traitorous even to him, but at least there was nothing mean in it. He kept no retreat for himself. He set his own life on

the edge of danger. But for that, the thing had hardly allured him. It was no safe, no easy task to manage the murder and the neat slaughter of the murderers, to grip the army in an hour of panic and make order and break Rupert's charge. Royston knew all the danger of it better than any man now. Even the affair of Eger, when on the windy February night the Irish made an end of Wallenstein, was hardly more perilous. And he had much to lose. If he bade Strozzi go hang, if he stood faithful to his general, he had a notable place sure. Not first indeed. While Cromwell lived, he knew well enough, he had no chance of that; whether the man were hypocrite or honest fanatic—and Royston had moments of doubt—he could commend himself to the Puritans like no other. There was Ireton, too. Royston's eager temper and that keen, silent mind paid each other an equal tribute of distrust. Still, he could win and keep a place not far below the first. It was no small thing in a land where the army must rule. He staked all that and life beside on the chance of a chance.

But if he won! It might be hard to snatch the mastery of that army, but if he had it, no man should set him aside. The Puritans liked him well. He could be a savory member with the best. They would follow him through death. That army! What a tool for a strong hand! The stanch yeoman breed, wrought with discipline, edged with fanatic faith! The yellow coats of Gustavus were



no better. He would speedily make an end of that fools' war. He had as good an eye as Cromwell's for a fight and for Cromwell's rashness and waste of men, a long apprenticeship in arms. Soon the army must be master of all England, and if he ruled the army—what end, what end to power?

. . . .  
He brushed his hand across his eyes. He rose and strode across the room and looked out at the dark a long while. Then he turned to Lucinda. "When is Strozzi to come again, child?"

Lucinda ran to him laughing. She caught his hands, she leaned toward him, giving all herself. "You are alive! You are alive!"

Royston looked down at the eager face that strained up to him. With a sudden passionate force he caught her in his arms, crushing her on his breast, lifting her, holding her to his will. And she clung to him and her lips were hungry. They had their hour.

So in the morning, when Strozzi came, he found Lucinda ready to haggle. She did it well. Strozzi covenanted to pay three thousand pounds before the thing was done and four thousand after. She got a ruby coronet beside. He was very well content. It occurred to his Lombard mind that the first three thousand were all he would ever pay. And Lucinda was of just the same opinion. Strozzi went off to a quiet tavern by Crendon and there Colonel Royston met him and made a plan.

Royston came back to his lodging well content, and lifted her out of her chair to be kissed. "O, you are greedy," she said, resisting a little.

"Why, madame wife has made a good bargain. She must get guerdon for it. So. So."

Lucinda turned her head for his greedy kisses, listless. There was a shadow in her eyes. His rude desire made her remember dead hopes and joys of waking maidenhood.

"A good bargain, has she not?" said Royston.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

### THE KING LOOKS THROUGH HIS FINGERS

"**L**UD," said Molly, the cake girl, "you look like a last year's apple."

"I feel as sound," said Alcibiade. The cheeks once ruddy and full were fallen lusterless and shriveled.

"I hate men," said Molly vehemently as she thrust him into a chair and put a tray of griddle cakes under his nose.

"It's a moral emotion," said Alcibiade with his mouth full.

"If there were no men there would be no wars," Molly explained.

"And equally no women. Behold the two delights of life abolished."

"Am I like a war?" said Molly, her arms akimbo.

"No, my dear, you are too terrific. Moreover, wars have an end, and you never will."

"You are a pig," said Molly rather tearfully, and indeed had some excuse in his manners with her cakes.

Alcibiade laughed. "Every good woman has a thousand children. O, understand me—in good

deeds that never die. So she is many times immortal. With reason she appals me. Consider, Molly. It is a responsibility to have no end."

"You are a goose," said Molly. "And where is my ardent lover?"

"I am the whole ark of the late Noah. And want as much to eat. But for the amorous Matthieu-Marc—alas, poor gentleman!" Alcibiade shook his head.

"Good lack, he is not dead?"

"Nay, mademoiselle. Only his trousers. Even in this moment he puts a patch on them for your sake. So much does he honor his beloved."

"I like his way," said Molly, gurgling.

"It is at least decent," Alcibiade agreed.

"Bo," said Molly, pursuing the simile of the goose. "And how is your master?"

Alcibiade became serious in the middle of a mouthful. "Molly, if one man could save an army, that man would have done it. *Grand Dieu!*" he spread his arms to heaven. "My colonel, he is my hero. I have seen him magnificent in victory, but I should have not known his majestic, glorious splendors if I had not seen him in defeat."

"What is he doing now?"

"It is probable," said Alcibiade, returning to earth, "that he is smoking his pipe."

In clouds of Virginia, Colonel Stow was thoughtful. The queer futility of his life occupied him. It seemed that he had been woven of vain desires.

What his soul chose to seek was ever proved mocking fantasy. He set his all on a woman and she turned to dust in his arms. He toiled for honor and power and when he earned them his cause had none to give. He fought to the edge of death for a King that proved himself base. Nay, the curse of waste was even on those who were linked with him. He made a rabble into a regiment of good soldiers only to fling them away in a fool's battle; made men of them to make them food for death.

He did not rave against fate or curse himself or expend lamentations. That was not in his temper. With a quiet, melancholy courage he thought out all the failures. Still he had lost faith in himself. He could feel his own strength still. If the mad battle of Naseby were to fight again, he could pray to do no better. Through all the folly of the war he took no blame. He had never played himself false. . . . Ay, it was the wrong cause. He had chosen recklessly as a boy for a light woman's sake. Well—there was no profit in regrets for that. With all falling on ruin, a man had no more right to repent than to desert. Honor asked a whole heart for the last desperate fight. If it was fate never to win, a man might fail worthily. The King—the King who would not die for his own cause—it was quaint matter for a man's devotion. Well. For the silliest faith a man might find decent death.

On which meditations intruded a letter. It was



the most polished note from my Lord Digby, begging the high favor of a word. Colonel Stow went with some curiosity. He did not love my Lord Digby and had imparted his affection.

Arrived in the anteroom of my Lord Digby's elegant lodging in Tom quad, he apprehended the honor more exactly. He made one of a notable company of scoundrels. My Lord Digby, it appeared, had been into the highways and byways, looking for filth and compelled it to come in. Colonel Stow surveyed them, smiling, and they him with some surprise. He found amongst them the most noted rake-hells of the army. "Vaughan and Price and O'Connor! Good morrow, fair gentles. Tom Blood and Geoghegan! Sure, I have turned into Heaven by mistake. We only lack Strozzi to make the angelic choir complete."

They snarled at him sulphurously.

Colonel Stow yawned. "You are so stale. I think you are all as old as the devil and as dull."

They made more noise. So that my Lord Digby was disturbed and sent a pale faced, clerkly secretary who rebuked them shrilly and called them all within. A result which happily accorded with Colonel Stow's intentions. He was left thoughtful. He had no esteem for my Lord Digby, and yet did not conceive him as a negotiator for bravos. In a little while the respectable troop came out, hats acock, swaggering, whispering, creatures of much importance. Colonel Stow bowed to them politely

and wished them a pleasant journey underground.

My Lord Digby had before him a letter in Italian, as thus:

Illustrious—Muster my good boys for the 20th. All goes well. Our friend is bit. He is caught. He devises marvelous well. The enemy moved to-day from Thame and will halt at Albury. Wheatley is the next stage, where the good lord general lies at Holton House. Our friend will let him have such tidings as may make him call a council on the Wednesday night and set the outposts so by Forest-hill that our good boys may come through them. Let them muster beyond the lines an hour after sundown. I'll be with them. Give the Palatine his orders to march an hour after that, to be upon Holton an hour after midnight and fall on when he hears pistol shots. And the devil prosper the work! It has cost a four thousand pound for our friend. He looks for as much more after. Put your tongue in your cheek. Salutations.

STROZZI.

Colonel Strozzi, you see, made his private profit. Now, what might have come of this pretty plot, where every man was false to every man, is pleasant matter for guessing, but the precise issue was determined by the ingenuity of my Lord Digby. Jermyn likened him to a terrier, because he could let neither well nor ill alone, and so far as he had

a character, there it is. The plan—leave its ethics out of the account—the plan was ingenious enough and the success of its kind in Germany gave good hope. But my Lord Digby, having built it, must needs meddle with it. So having trusted Colonel Strozzi with the King's cause and his honor, he be-thought him that Colonel Strozzi was not to be trusted. So, afraid of the design, he let it go on, afraid of Strozzi, let him command, and where all for good or ill must be swayed by his brain, where he must be trusted altogether or no whit, would set another company to watch him and check him. Hence Colonel Stow.

He was received with effusion. "Sir, there is no man in the army I could be so glad to see," cried my Lord Digby.

"That is disappointing," said Colonel Stow blandly.

My Lord Digby was not touchy. "O, I know your wit, sir," he laughed.

"I can not say the same, my lord."

"So, having crossed swords, honor is satisfied and we can talk sense. Nay, sir, this is the King's service."

"I am at his, but not at yours, my lord."

"We understand each other," said my Lord Digby, "and I know you for an honest man."

"Imagine my reply, my lord."

"Now, sir, can you find a score of others of your kidney? Stout, honest fellows," my Lord Digby's

eyes twinkled, "who'll suffer no craft from cunning folk like me?"

Colonel Stow hesitated. He did not see his way. "Why, my lord," he said slowly, "no doubt there are men of honor we have not lost yet. Are there none of your friends?"

"Dear sir," said my Lord Digby, laughing, "my friends have too many wits to have much else. I want plain, honest men, good soldiers, who set their all upon the King."

"There are enough of us who have done that," said Colonel Stow.

"You can find a score of them?"

"Why, yes, my lord. But I'll not move a hand for you without knowing more."

"O, sir, I know you love me little, and perhaps I have little cause to love you. But I know what you are worth. I know you are trusty to the last and the best captain of horse we have. So I seek you out. The cause commands us both."

"Well, my lord?"

"You know Colonel Strozzi?"

"Better than I desire."

"Would you trust him?"

"No more than I must."

"It is my own mind. Sir, a great design has been entrusted to him."

"Hang the fellow that did it, my lord," exclaimed Colonel Stow.

"You think that?" said my Lord Digby, with

rising eyebrows. "Admirable. You are my man."

"I can not conceive it," said Colonel Stow.

"Look you, sir, what I want is a man who will watch him, a man with the wit to know if he prove a traitor and the courage to strike."

"Well, my lord?"

"Sir, a soldier of your service must know well that we are come to a desperate pass. It is not to be concealed that the King's fortune vibrates on the verge of the abyss." My Lord Digby smirked at his phrase. "The cure for peril is more peril. We dare what it's folly to dare because we dare no other. Now, sir, Colonel Strozzi had a plan full of the hazard of hope—"

"And of the chink of coin?" said Colonel Stow politely.

My Lord Digby was put out. "I never took him for Aristides," he said with some acidity. "Sir, it is plain to you that we are in no case to meet the army of the Parliament upon a stricken field. We must therefore seek out some design, some cunning strategy to set us an equal chance. This I conceive I have done." Colonel Stow, who had known examples of my Lord Digby's art military, permitted himself a smile. "An army without leaders," says my lord with his wise air, "is but fools multiplied. The more fools be multiplied the less they are to fear. So, sir, it's my design to strike at the head. Every army has but one neck if you can find it. In fine, sir, I would jugulate rebellion at a stroke."



"If I count right," said Colonel Stow, "you have said the same thing five times."

"Nay, sir, each time the import grows," said my lord with pride as a master of language. "In this, look you, Colonel Strozzi is our sword, but I would have you for our breastplate if the sword play false. Now the design is this—"

Colonel Stow put up his hand. "My lord, am I so much your friend?"

My Lord Digby laughed. "Dear sir, it's your surliness delights me."

"I do not know that I have anything else at your service."

"This is the King's service, sir."

"Well, my lord."

"A gruff, honest fellow of your breed is our need now. We have enough of supple subtlety in Strozzi. Now, sir, this is the matter. To-night Strozzi takes a score of his friends away to the rebel lines. He has tidings that their generals, Fairfax and the Ironside and young Ireton the lawyer, hold a council at Holton House. He has bribed their outposts, he swears, and can win through and end these sweet saints."

"Even as Butler and Devereaux made an end of Wallenstein," said Colonel Stow. His eyes had grown keen.

"It was indeed the exemplar," said my Lord Digby. "Here you have the marrow of it. Now, our fear is where our hope is—in Strozzi. He has had

money enough through his fingers to make him play double. Or the thing is worth enough for him to sell it to the rebels."

"Ay, my lord, the man who will do murder is ever the man you can not trust to do it."

"Why, the greatest murderer is the greatest soldier. Well, sir you see your part. We ask no more of you than to ride with Strozzi and see that he does his work. If you find him paltering with us, cut him down. Is it plain?"

"O, plain enough, my lord. I can not tell why you should honor me so."

"I protest, sir, it proves our value for you." . . . Colonel Stow's lips were set in a grim smile. . . . "And shall be followed by advancement," my Lord Digby went on with rising emphasis. "Well, sir, your answer?"

"Be assured you shall have it," said Colonel Stow, and rising made his bow.

"Sure, you men of action need no time for thought."

"I have not said that we do."

"Yet you delay? Well, have an hour, one hour. Remember your oath and the cause and the honor of the King."

"It is my whole thought," said Colonel Stow, and went out.

My Lord Digby sighed as a man of taste who has had to deal with the dull necessities of life, and refreshed himself from a scent box of clear tortoise-

shell and took up a manuscript book of Mr. Waller's poems bound in ivory.

Colonel Stow made across the quadrangle to the lodging of the King.

The King could give audience to no one. The King could be approached by no one. The King was at his devotions. Colonel Stow would wait. The usher shrugged at him. No man could tell when the King's devotions might end. Still Colonel Stow would wait. The usher hinted not obscurely that Colonel Stow was a fool. Colonel Stow asked for Captain Bourne of the King's Guard.

Gilbert Bourne had changed much and might have been Colonel Stow's equal in age. The two met with a grave kindliness. "You are strange here. You are little of a courtier, I think," said Gilbert Bourne. "Can I serve you?"

"I have that to say to the King which touches his honor nearly," said Colonel Stow in a low voice, glancing at the usher. Gilbert Bourne bade that long-eared gentleman out. They crossed to the middle of the room, and, standing close, "There is a plan afoot which will shame him for ever," said Colonel Stow and looked keenly at Gilbert Bourne. But in his face there was little surprise. "I have been with my Lord Digby." Gilbert Bourne nodded. "For the King's own sake, get me audience of him."

Gilbert Bourne turned without a word. He was gone some long while, but when he came back,

signed to Colonel Stow to follow him. The King was in his presence chamber, a long, dim lit room hung with somber tapestry. It made harmony with him. He had the black velvet and silver of melancholy. His long scented hair was arranged in a sorrowful pattern, a thin jeweled hand hung in listless affection over the open pages of Mr. George Herbert's *Temple* that lay upon his knee. He raised to Colonel Stow large liquid eyes of impotence. He drooped.

Colonel Stow saluted soldierly. The King made languid answer. "May I pray your Majesty's ear?" The King inclined his head. Colonel Stow glanced at Mr. Ashburnham on one side and Gilbert Bourne on the other. "Sir, 'tis a matter of the royal honor and should be for none but you."

The King looked at him with contemptuous wonder, then turned to Gilbert Bourne. "I thought I bade the gentleman speak, Gilbert?" he said wearily.

Gilbert Bourne signed to Colonel Stow. "It is your Majesty's choice," said Colonel Stow. "Sir, I am come to you from my Lord Digby—"

The King waved a limp hand. "My Lord Digby has all our mind."

"But do you know all his, sir? Sir, my Lord Digby has a design which will cover all your cause with shame."

The King turned to Gilbert Bourne. "We can not suffer slander of our trusty friends, Gilbert."

"Nay, sir, yourself shall judge whether I slander him or he slanders you."

"This is boorish, Gilbert," said the King, and leaned his head on his hand.

"I am not to be stayed from serving you by a rough word, sir. My Lord Digby sent for me, and on my coming desired my help for an infamous venture—"

The King dropped his hand over his eyes. "This is not to be borne," he said wearily.

"Ay, sir, it is not to be borne that he speaks in your name and in your cause. For he plans no less than a bloody murder. He has got together a party of bravos, he has bribed some villain of the rebel side, and he purposes to assassinate their generals to-night. Sir, I know you can be nothing in it, but whether he stumble or succeed, all Europe will put the blame on you."

The King looked through his fingers. "You are either very false or very foolish, sir."

"If you doubt me, bring my Lord Digby to my face and see how much he can deny."

"We do not need. We would not so insult my lord, who is all trusty."

"By Heaven, sir, 'tis within the knowledge of a score. He broached it to me openly as I to you. I beseech you, confront me with him."

"We are well assured of the loyalty of my lord, who is all for our honor," said the King in the same level, tired voice.



"Ods blood, sir, do you want to be blind to the truth? I swear as God rules, my Lord Digby means to link your cause with a foul murder. If you value your honor a pennyweight, search into it."

"This fellow is insolent, Gilbert," said the King.

Colonel Stow drew back. "Ay, shut your eyes to it, then," he cried. "Know naught of the villainy till you can profit by it. By Heaven, the assassin that risks his skin is a better man!"

The King started to his feet and stood mutely bidding him away, a picturesque figure of sad dignity, a saint scorning blasphemy.

Colonel Stow laughed at him and strode out.

Then Gilbert Bourne approached eagerly and fell on his knee. "I pray you, sir, I pray you, give me leave to ask—"

"Nay, lad, nay, not now," said the King with a sad, gentle smile. "I have many matters."

"But, sir, I pray you for this gentleman—"

"Not now, lad. I must be alone with God." He patted Gilbert Bourne kindly and turned away to his oratory.

Gilbert Bourne changed a shrug and a look of despair with Mr. Ashburnham and went out.

Colonel Stow returned at some speed to my Lord Digby. My Lord Digby, who had beheld his movements through the window, kept him waiting in the anteroom. Colonel Stow smote with his sword hilt on the table and the pale secretary came in alarmed hurry. "Tell my lord that if I can not keep him from

being a villain, I will not help him," he cried. And my Lord Digby within heard and smiled.

Colonel Stow had hardly come back to his lodgings before the Provost Marshal with a posse waited on him and escorted him to the prison in Bocardo.

## CHAPTER FORTY

### A CAVALIER DIES

COLONEL Stow sat laughing. A cell in Bocardo was a quaint byway ending to it all.

There was an elfish humor in things. He determined upon death as the best career; he set himself to be a respectable martyr for a silly cause, and, behold, the cause would have none of him save as a murderer. What would the next turn be? All things were possible where Charles was King. Perhaps when the plot was known, when England was crying shame and a scapegoat needed, they would pitch on him for a hanging. That would be a harmonious end.

What would come of it? Colonel Stow had an adequate distrust of Strozzi. He might be playing doubly, trebly false. It would not be the first time. Suppose him trusty, suppose him successful, and Fairfax and Cromwell done to death, what then? Doubtless the King would have an hour of vantage. Doubtless the Puritan army might be hurled back in chaos. But the hour would pass. It was not in Fairfax or Cromwell that the Puritan power lay. Fanatics were never beaten by their leaders' death.

They stood by their own strong faith. Ay, they stood by the weakness of the King. While the King was King his cause could never triumph. There was no victory for a man who kept faith with none, who told the truth not even to himself. He looked through his fingers. He was a liar in grain, and the impotence of the liar cursed his cause. There was no question of the end. Soon or late the Puritans must trample him down.

And then? With some grim humor Colonel Stow imagined the Puritans marching down the Cornmarket and Bocardo door battered open and himself, something lean, coming dazzled to the light. So he had seen Tilly's Croats at Ingolstadt. But in a month they were riding again with Pappenheim's black hussars. With him all would be finished. The King cast him off, the Puritans would want none of him. If he sought fortune beyond seas, there was scant hope. The war was burned out in Germany. French and Austrian fronted each other still, but weariness laid heavy hands on them. The clouds of peace were gathering. Only England offered fortune for the sword, and England would none of him.

It remained to creep home with the burden of defeat. He winced. . . . There was some pain in that. He had bragged of high hopes; he had held himself for a man of power. Kind folks would remind him of it, and though they might be borne, with each petty day he would remind himself. To

be a quiet yeoman, to occupy with the cattle and the corn . . . he smiled at himself . . . It was a farce of a tragedy. God save a lad from dreams! Long days in the tilth of the vale, long days after the ewes on the down, it was a dead life for a man who had charged Wallenstein's squares, who had held the surge of Cromwell's pursuit. He felt again the wild throb of peril, the glad call of death that wakes the soul to mastery. That, all that was gone. He was to be the prisoner of circumstance. For him the life of an ox at stall.

Ay, it rang a strange discord with dreams. He, who was a captain of men, came with impotent heart, limping home to hide in the corner chance gave him. Doubtless he had what he earned. O, doubtless, a fool had a fool's harvest. And yet—and yet—despair could not grip him so that he doubted himself a soldier. He had proved his strength.

But he had played it false. He had wasted it on a carrion cause. Like a drunken man he had gone reeling after the first trumpet call. A drunken man—faith it was the right name for him. He had been drunk with the poisonous desire of dreams. To love a woman well, to stake life upon her, must ever be wild fortune; it was plain ruin for a man to give his soul to the woman born of his own mind. With a grim smile he saw again the dream creature who had been the queen of his soul, her who was quick with every noble passion, utterly loyal to the right heart



of life, and likened her to the real woman, throbbing for nothing but the fierce greed of desire. He was unjust, but he did not yield to hate or seek to believe her formed of all baseness. That was not his nature. Only he saw her lithe form, instinct with eager strength, and felt what she had done for him and his friend. But for his friend he might have been merciful. He was man enough to set the brand of that treason on the woman.

But he held himself in fault first and last. It was not her blame that he asked more of her than the fair body which was all she had to give. It was his own choice to worship, his own choice to obey. Yes, God save every man from the woman of his dreams.

He was curious to fancy what might have happened if she had been other. But there had never been another woman and certainly there would be no other now. He felt himself old and bloodless beyond all desire. Still, it was amusing to make the might have been. Suppose that clean little Puritan lass—but she was a little cold for his temper and more than a little too righteous for his easy honesty. He was ill at ease with so many virtues. And yet a delicious child. Clear eyed, fragrant, like may in the dew. Yes. Clear eyed. There would be no cheat in her. For a moment he conceived himself a Puritan.

Then laughing, thanked God he was not. He had escaped at least the burden of sanctity. It was a

certain consolation. He remained a man. He dared do wrong.

So he took counsel with himself while the last red light faded through the grating and died. They were not early with their candles in Bocardo. He sat some while in the dark before the bolts creaked and he heard a, "Zounds, is this how you serve a gentleman? Lights, rogue!"

He knew that voice. In a moment he was blinking through the candle-light at Gilbert Bourne. "Well, sir?"

Gilbert Bourne signed the turnkey away. "Go talk with your fellows below, knave," and drew Colonel Stow to the far corner. "You are right, sir," he said in a low voice. "They do intend this damnable thing." Colonel Stow laughed. "Lud, can you take it so?"

"Why, when I took it gravely, you saw what came of it. Faith, 'tis a fool that has a better conscience than his King."

"Sir, the King is misled by ill counselors."

"O, do not believe it. He'll find none worse than himself."

"I must believe it. And we must save him."

Colonel Stow looked round his cell. "I have done my part, I think," he said with a sneer.

"I know you better, sir," cried Gilbert Bourne. Colonel Stow looked at the lad with a new interest. His face was exalted, like a man's glad to ride his last charge.

Colonel Stow shrugged. "He chooses to be a knave. Let him wear the brand."

"He is the King," said Gilbert Bourne, and Colonel Stow laughed at the reverence in his voice. "O, sir, we can not hold him guilty. He is blinded by villains. We must save him from the shame of it." He laid an earnest hand on Colonel Stow. "Sir, you have felt it as I. We must go on."

"Faith, I think I went some way," said Colonel Stow with a grim laugh. "I have my reward. If you want more, go to a gentleman outside Bocardo. I tell you plainly I have no more will to help you than power."

"I know you better, sir," said Gilbert Bourne again.

"By Heaven, you know too much for me," said Colonel Stow angrily. "If you mean anything, tell me what you mean."

"Believe me, I am all your friend," said Gilbert Bourne, gently enough. "There is a debt . . . come out of your prison now and help me save our King."

"O, for your King—there is no man to save him. Kill the King and his cause might conquer. Look you, sir, I have given him all my strength and this is the end of it. He may carry the mark of hell for me. And for myself—I had as lief be nothing in the blackest prison as nothing under the bluest sky of heaven."

"A man's not nothing while there is work for

him," said Gilbert Bourne, and Colonel Stow looked at him strangely. The lad dared be stronger than he.

"Where is it?" said Colonel Stow.

"Come with me now. I have told them I come to take you to the King. There are horses in waiting behind St. Aldate's. We will ride to Holton and tell the Puritans the King has tidings of a murderous, treacherous attack intended and hath sent us to give them all honorable warning."

Colonel Stow let out a laugh that rang true. "Conceive the Royal gratitude!" But Gilbert Bourne did not laugh. "'Thank you for nothing and my honor,' quoth his Majesty. O, he will put up a *Te Deum* for his trusty servants. I would go for the joke of it. But lad, this will be no easy thing. We have to outride Strozzi's babes and pass them. And I do not know—but there must be some attack in force to follow on the murder. The roads will be dangerous."

"I know I need you," said Gilbert Bourne simply.

Colonel Stow was already buckling his sword. "Why, I am a fool that jumps for a chance of action. And a moment ago I thought my blood dead! Well. But I know what you are doing for me, lad."

"I—remember," said Gilbert Bourne unsteadily. "Come." He led out and down the dark, broken stairs. At the foot an escort of a corporal and two men lounged, chattering with the gaoler.

"By your good leave, sir," says the gaoler, coming forward, "will you sign my book here?" and

while Gilbert Bourne was writing, "and will you bring un back to-night, sir?"

"The King's service governs all, my friend," said Gilbert Bourne.

In a moment they were marching with the escort swiftly down the Cornmarket. At Gilbert Bourne's quarters in St. Aldate's they stopped. The escort was bidden wait at the door. Colonel Stow went in by the front door and out at the back. There were horses saddled in the lane.

Gilbert Bourne had the password. They were across Magdalen bridge with hardly a check. As they turned by the Wheatley road they heard the cavalry mustering in the river meadows, and changed a glance. "We'll be between them and Strozzi's babes," said Colonel Stow, and laughed irrelevantly.

"Strozzi is half an hour ahead. Where shall we pass him?"

Colonel Stow laughed again. "'Tis all a mad business. What will you give for your life?"

"If we save the King—"

"Who desires damnation."

"O, sir, you wrong him. He is in the hands of evil counselors. He is of a noble heart. In a better hour he will give us thanks. It is but the villains who have his ear. Sure, sir, it's our part to give all for his honor."

Colonel Stow smiled to himself at this desperate loyalty. But, "God save you, lad," said he kindly



enough. "I'll do my share." He admitted no debt to the King. But the humor of preserving the royal honor against the royal will attracted him more and more and the wild adventure had its own charm. So they rode on knee by knee up Shotover.

It was a dark, heavy night and the horses labored wet against the hill. Not a leaf moved above them, not a sound came. Even their own din was muffled in the chill, dank vapors. The sky was a low, narrow vault of gloom, unbroken by a strand of starlight.

"Fit night for murder and camisado," said Colonel Stow. "Strozzi has luck."

"Who knows?" quoth Gilbert Bourne.

Colonel Stow, peering at him through the gloom, saw the eagerness of his face.

They breasted the hill top and after a moment broke to a gallop again on the level plateau. The air seemed to move at last. It bit keen at nostril and eye. They made speed. Here on the hill the night was clearer. They could see the gray ribbon of road some way ahead. But no sound came. Strozzi held them fairly.

They were close upon the farther slope, already through the trees they caught glimpses of the abyss below, when Colonel Stow cocked his head aside. "What was that?" he said sharply. But Gilbert Bourne heard nothing. It was a moment more till a sound came clear.

"We are on them," cried Gilbert Bourne.

"'Tis the last thing we want," said Colonel Stow, and checked and drew aside. But Gilbert Bourne, heedless, dashed on.

A rough voice cried "Milano?" out of the gloom. "Milano?" It was plainly a password. Gilbert Bourne had no answer. Two horsemen plunged at him. Colonel Stow saw the white flicker of their swords. He drove in his spurs and charged. But before he came, Gilbert Bourne was down and the two reining round. He got his point home in one, but the fellow kept the saddle and broke away.

Colonel Stow leaped down to his friend. He could bear no help. There was a grim wound in the lad's throat and already he lay in a pool of blood. "On!" he gasped. "On! You now! For—for the King!" and even as Colonel Stow, all hopeless, tried to close the wound he moved a little and sighed and was still.

Colonel Stow stood over him with grim, set face. O, the King owed life a debt! How many men had fallen for the honor of him who cared nothing for honor? Poor lad, with his desperate loyalty, with his faith in a faithless king, his life for a false dream . . .

Colonel Stow caught the dead man's pistols, sprang to the saddle and made off down hill at a mad pace. If time might serve, the King should have no profit of this baseness.

But close behind came the boom of Rupert's hurrying squadrons.

## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

### WIFE AND MAID

THE sunset light was coming to an upper chamber in Thame. There David Stow's wife, Joy, setting new roses in a great blue bowl, belied her name with sighs. The room was neat and spotless as the white linen at her neck, but, her roses ordered, she could not be content with it and looked narrowly over the light oak wainscot and put the settle and the great leather chairs anew and took the pewter salvers down to put them up again.

To this business came Joan Normandy, grave and pale from the burden of her nursing. Joy ran to her with a little glad cry. "O, you come kindly. I was beginning to be sad."

"My dear, I come to be made merry," said Joan with her grave smile.

"You are very good for me, because you make me feel sinful," said Joy, and compelled her to the pleasantest chair and took her gray cloak from her.

"Am I a Pharisee, then?"

"Joan! It is wrong in you to make so little of yourself. If you have no assurance of salvation, how can we dare?"

"We'll not match ourselves, dear," said Joan gently. "And, indeed, I think 'tis not assurance but works that make one happy."

Joy watched her with a wise, tender smile. "How can I dare be sad?" she said half to herself. "I have only parting to bear when God's work calls him away. And you," there were tears in her eyes, "dear heart, you have not even begun to be happy yet."

"Have I not? You are grown wise, Joy. And yet—were you not happy the old days—before?"

Joy laughed a little softly. Her eyes were aglow with a glad, pure wonder and joy. "Ah, telling tells nothing," she said. "Dear, it was blind life, a halt life to this. Indeed, till you have given your life away, you can not live, I think. I never knew I was anything till I was all his. And now—Joan, to be rich and give!"

"Yes," Joan said. She was lying back in her chair and her face hidden in the shadow.

The sunlight was changing and failing and the crimson of the roses grew dark. Joy took one from the bowl and came to lay it against the broad white collar that fell over Joan's heart. "Some day," she said softly. "Some day."

Joan's hand closed on hers with sudden strength. "No," she murmured, and laughed then. "'Tis a white rose for me, dear."

Joy drew away a little and looked down at her with grave, pitiful eyes. She began to speak and

checked herself. "I'll believe in the red rose," she said. "God never meant women for maids."

Joan was near as red as the rose. "Is a woman only a woman?" she said in a strange, stern voice. "Has she no soul above that? Sure, beyond this world there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, nor men nor women."

"Is that what it means?" said Joy with a kindly scorn, such as a mother might use to a foolish child.

"Dear, I would not despise your gladness," said Joan so sagely that a little reckless, nervous laugh broke from her friend. "But God does not design it for all women, I think. I am not made for—for—" a delicate color stained her brow. "I could not give all of myself, indeed. Ah, do you know how I shrink from it?" Joy laid a gentle caressing hand on her shoulder, but she drew away. "Yes, yes, it is right, I know. But it is horrible to me. I am not made for that. I must possess myself. I can not be true to God else." Her voice rang queerly and there was fear in Joy's eyes. Come from maid to wife with no sorrow, she did not know this passion of womanhood turned against itself. "Nay, but I am a sick fool to talk so," cried Joan between a laugh and a sob. "Tell me of Madame Joy's joys. Has the good man ever a will of his own now?"

"My dear!" said Joy, who had no jest ready.

"O, I vow he is mighty obedient."

Joy was demure. "Nay, dear, there is no obed-



ience in marriage. The desire of one is the desire of the other. You have to make him see that."

"Poor soul!" said Joan. "And what has he made you see?"

"That I am the most wonderful creature in the world," said Joy. "Because he is."

"You are wise."

"'Tis the one thing he never called me."

"The poor gentleman is hard put to it. If he calls you wise to love him—"

"He says that water is wet."

"Nay, he sings his own praises."

"'Tis the same thing."

"And therefore idle. But if he saith, 'Fool to love me—' "

"It would be plain folly."

"And slander of you. Which is the same thing again. So like a wise husband, he keeps his tongue behind his teeth."

"Indeed, he does no such thing!" cried Joy with indignation. "You see," she smiled, blushing, "you see I have to be told so many times."

"It argues want of faith," said Joan.

Joy laughed. "It argues—" she faltered, "it argues—" she flung her arms wide and stood so. "Just that."

But afterwards in the dark when Joan was gone she sat and cried for the maid's lonely heart. To her gladness that fierce passion for maidenhood was of all things most miserable.

## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

### THE NIGHT ALARM

**E**VEN as Colonel Stow started away down the hill side, Rupert's vanguard shouted a challenge from behind. He took his horse on at a mad speed, but broke from the track to the open turf on his left. By the sound Strozzi's men were well before him, but there might be more of their rear guards. Rupert's men kept the road, striking straight for the heart of the Puritan army. Strozzi had borne away toward Shotover pond and Colonel Stow, following hard, saw at once the gray glimmer of it and far down the road the gleam of fires in the Puritan outposts, Rupert's goal. Still Strozzi held the same swift pace. Plainly he feared no trap. He trusted the traitor who was to let him in.

It seemed he was right. Colonel Stow, riding reckless, drew close upon him and saw his troops break unchallenged over the cross-roads and up the grassy slope beyond and turn sharp and plunge into the wooded demesne of Holton. The trees stood like vague, dark ghosts. Strozzi's men broke their ranks and checked perforce and checked again. But Colonel Stow held on. The lights of a house twinkled

through the gloom. Strozzi's men drew together again, reined up and dismounted. A few were left with the horses. The rest made a scurry for the house. Then Colonel Stow drove his spurs home and asked the last strength of his horse.

He broke into them just before the door. He rode some down before they caught his bridle and slashed at him and his horse. He let off a pistol at the nearest head and roared, "Guard! Turn out, guard!" Orderlies came running out of the house and he heard the spit of an Italian oath and Strozzi's voice hissing, "On, bullies, on!" His horse shrieked to a vicious thrust and stumbled. He flung himself from the saddle, firing again as he fell.

His shots echoing across the dark were mightily answered. Around them far and near the pickets woke with musket flash and rattle and trumpets pealed. The army roused with a mile long din, clatter of steel and hurrying tramp. It was time. The thunder of horsemen grew and the air flamed yellow, and there came the dull rolling roar of fight. Rupert struck home.

On the threshold of the house the Puritan orderlies made stand and Strozzi's men hurled at them in a mass. Colonel Stow staggered to his feet and thrust into the midst, crushed, sweating, cheek to cheek. In the dark, in the frenzy of that mad mêlée, none knew him from another, and striking from below with short sword craftily, he slew men who cursed their comrades for the deed and died. So by

the space of their dead bodies he won on through the press. He must to the front! If he were to serve, he must to the front, and the fortune of the night walked upon a sword's edge now. Reckless, ruthless, he panted on.

The orderlies held the doorway gallantly a while, but they were overborne by the storm of steel and slain. Trampling them down, the mad troop surged on. A sturdy door brought them up short. Strozzi and the foremost hurled themselves upon it in vain. Then, with bare sword, Strozzi beat the crowd back to get room for a run, yelling many things in Italianate English. All together they dashed at the oak and Colonel Stow, locked close with the rest, let off his third pistol at a venture low into the midst of them. He saw Strozzi's livid face turn as they crashed on the door and in the shriek of the tearing timber heard him hiss, "I'll flay the hound who has done that firing." The great door failed before them and whirled back, and pell mell, all staggering and falling, they hurtled into the hall.

There was no light now, save from the fire. Behind a barricade of table and chairs, the generals stood to arms. Strozzi's men found their feet and stared and held off, muttering. Colonel Stow remembered that silent moment of shame; old Skippon with the sleeve drawn back from his fat arm, breathing noisily through his mouth as he made his sword quiver; Cromwell towering above him, the coarse, fat face distorted with the anger of battle,

and the red flame light falling queerly on his gray eyes; Fairfax, plainly by his swordsman's poise, the best man of his hands of them all, with a quiet smile on his lips and his eyes; Ireton, keen and calm, with a strange frown of wonder and puzzle; and before them the score of sweating, foaming bullies, faltering, fearing the attack.

Strozzi cursed them vehemently. "Passion of Christ! You are five to one, fools, five to one! Have at them! Blood! Blood!" and he dashed at Cromwell. No one ever called him a coward. For a moment he fought alone with the four, but so fierce was his fury, he took no hurt, and a red line grew dark and darker on Cromwell's neck. At sight of that there was a mad shout and the bullies charged forward together. Colonel Stow, swept on in that brute charge, heard Cromwell's deep chested laughter and fired his last pistol into the nearest head. While the acrid smoke was still about him, while Strozzi yelled: "Will you stick that fool with the pistols?" it seemed that he heard a cry from without answer the shot. Then men turned swords upon him and some knew him and broke into fierce, wild oaths and though the dead man was his buckler, he hardly kept them off a moment. The burden and the press were too much. With scarce one wound, by force of blunted thrusts, he was borne down beneath the dead, and trampling on them both, spurning them, the bullies charged on to their prey.

The generals were in sore case. Skippon was



bleeding and failing and Ireton the lawyer, too; Cromwell reeked and panted in the stress; only Fairfax held his own, smiling still, and fought on like Bussy or Bayard. But from without came loud the thunder of galloping horsemen. Cromwell drew back from the medley of steel a moment, and shouted in the voice of his battles: "Who is on my side? Who?"

Deep and exultant the shout came back: "The sword of the Lord!"

Strozzi sprang out of the fight with an oath and turned to run. The others had no more heart. In a moment they were pushing out in a wild mob as they had stormed in. Some of the first were in time and broke away to their horses and fled all ways, like rabbits, but the most of them came full upon the rush of Puritan troopers and fell like grass to the scythe. There was no mercy. "Spare them not!" cried the captain. "Utterly destroy!" and they were hewn down, and red with blood, the troopers broke into the hall, and fell to stabbing the wounded and the dead. Cromwell clambered up the barricade and sat himself on it and looked at the butchery and laughed, and wiping the blood and sweat from his neck, broke out with a hoarse chant:

The Lord's my light and saving health,  
Who shall make me dismay'd?  
My life's strength is the Lord; of whom,  
Then, shall I be afraid?

When as mine enemies and foes  
    (Most wicked persons all)  
To eat my flesh against me rose,  
    They stumbled and did fall.

But Fairfax, with a sharp order, checked the ghastly slaying of the slain. The captain grumbled something of the Amalekites. "But a live Amalekite would be most useful," said Ireton, the lawyer. He had the candles lit again and began to look the bodies over. Under the fellow whose head he had blown in, Colonel Stow was found, wounded and bruised and still half stunned. "Ah. The gentleman of the pistol," said Ireton with interest. With cold steel on brow and spine they brought him to.

Old Skippon, who had got back some of his breath and his wits came puffing forward with a, "Captain Evans, Captain Daniel Evans, in the name of God, what is the firing at Wheatley?"

"The Philistines came upon us in force, sir," said the captain. "I know not the issue. Major Harrison, when he heard the firing here, dispatched me unto you."

"Ah, the firing," said Ireton.

"Now, this is a damnable thing," cried Skippon. "They would murder us before the attack."

By this time, Colonel Stow was tottering on his feet, and looking all round him with dull eyes.

"There is the craft of the man of blood in it," cried Cromwell. He turned to Fairfax. "O, sir,

let's to horse speedily. We do the Lord wrong to glory yet!" But as he marched to the door his eyes fell upon Colonel Stow and he checked suddenly, staring. There was something familiar to him in that face.

And then Colonel Royston came striding over the dead. He had no doubt of Strozzi's deed. There had been fair chance and full time. He thought himself supreme. He was all ready to snatch command. . . . In one swift glance he saw that he had lost, that he had sold his honor for nothing, that peril was close about him. He did not fail himself. Not a muscle moved in the strong dark face. He saluted Fairfax. "Sir, this is surely the Lord's doing."

"And it is marvelous in our eyes," said Ireton, regarding him benignly.

"Sir, I thank God for your escape. Faith, the whole cause hath been in much danger. I have had the whole of the enemy's horse upon my posts at Wheatley."

"And have ye beat them off?" cried Skippon.

"Sir, the Lord's a good help."

"O, sir, let's give Him all the glory!" cried Cromwell, clapping him on the shoulder.

"I shall try," quoth Royston. He heard some one laugh, and turning, saw a draggled, dirty fellow in the grip of two troopers. Their eyes met. They were away in the world of the real. Their souls dealt together unveiled and quivered with re-

gret and scorn and shame for the lost sure faith and love.

Cromwell fell on his knees and began to pray loudly.

But among them all, Colonel Stow alone bore his head unbowed.

## CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

### MOLLY PROPOSES

**I**N the publicity of the Cornmarket Molly embraced Matthieu-Marc, whose emotions were rather decent than grateful.

"But, mademoiselle, nay mademoiselle," he cried, extricating himself with energy, but with difficulty. "I assure you I do not deserve it."

"But you have been working for my sake, sweetheart," quoth Molly, languishing at him.

"Not at all. I have been mending my breeches."

"Sure, that was for my sake," and Molly regarded them with affection.

Matthieu-Marc fingered the patch nervously and nervously looked from it to her. "It does not chime with its background," he admitted. "No, it is certainly not beautiful. But it is necessary."

"Like me," said Molly, and set her cake basket on one arm and tucked the other into his and propelled him with her toward Carfax, like a jolly, round body of a woman parading a reluctant scarecrow.

"My pretty," said the reluctant Matthieu-Marc, "this is not seemly."



"Fie now!" cried Molly. "You would not make me do unmaidenly, would you? A kind gentleman!"

"Indeed, I would not," Matthieu-Marc protested with tears in his voice.

"Why, then," says she generously, "I'll never be ashamed with you, dearie."

"You will understand," said Matthieu-Marc uneasy in her vigorous arm, "that my situation is invidious."

"Sure it is sweet in you to say so," Molly murmured and leaned on him affectionately. Matthieu-Marc groaned.

They were then hailed boisterously by a shaggy sergeant of Sir Marmaduke's regiment. "What, Molly! Who is your prop?"

"This is my new husband, bless him!" cried Molly with pride. "See how happy he is!"

"Ods bones, it would take two of him to make you a husband."

"But it needs only half of me to make him a wife, so I am in spirits. Am I not, sweetheart?" She turned to the hapless Matthieu-Marc. But he fairly fought himself free, and sped round the corner.

"Good lusty fellow," the sergeant cried.

"'Tis his breeches, poor soul," said Molly, and returned to business, and after so fair an advertisement sold many cakes.

She was going home to fill her basket again when

she saw Colonel Stow borne by the provost marshal to Bocardo and stood agape. When the posse came out she was still there. "Lud, master, what hath he done, poor soul?" says she to one of them.

"Made a face at the King, lass!"

"Sure a cat may do that."

"But he is none, being no woman."

Then Molly's trade suffered, for she was more zealous in seeking Alcibiade than in selling cakes. But Alcibiade, who was indulging a mind that loved the rural and a body that loved running water by a walk over the meadows to bathe in the Cher at Marston, was not found till sundown. Languid and very peaceful he sauntered down St. Giles to meet a warm effervescent Molly, who upbraided him without reason given; stated that he was a fool to care about his master; that his master was six times as good as he; that his master was in prison for cursing the King; that there was nothing to be done, and he had better do it at once instead of making love to dairymaids.

Through all which Alcibiade preserved a calm that exasperated her extremely. When she had exhausted herself, he sauntered on with his original ease. At the gate of Bocardo she beheld him in jovial converse with the gaoler and swore she hated him. But presently his pace down the Cornmarket was quicker.

Alcibiade had little luck. From the gaoler he learned that Colonel Stow had been taken away by

Gilbert Bourne. Outside Gilbert Bourne's quarters in St. Aldate's he saw an escort under arms and by them was told that Colonel Stow was within. He went in. But again he was too late. The rooms were bare. He did not publish the news. Some of the fact he guessed at once. Captain Gilbert Bourne helped his master escape. Tit for tat. There was but one way of escape—off to the Puritans. Alcibiade did some varied drinking with sergeants and quartermasters and learned the password of the night. Then he took himself and a horse out over Magdalen bridge and away. But he was still out of luck. He had not gone two miles when he came upon the rear of Rupert's horsemen. He could not pass them. There was naught to be learned of them. He loitered with the rearguard, trying to find some reason in it all.

When they crashed on the outposts at Wheatley, when relying on a traitor commandant, politely ready for defeat, they charged the main camp, they hurled themselves into a trap. Colonel Royston had been careful. His dragooners enfiladed them at close range and shattered them utterly. Alcibiade held aloof. It was no affair of his. But he did not reckon on the full greatness of the disaster. The fresh squadrons Royston hurled at the shattered ranks swept them back like dust before the wind, and in the rout Alcibiade was caught and ridden down and lay with many another in that ghastly harvest of Colonel Strozzi's ingenuity.

It may be doubted whether he suffered that night as much as Matthieu-Marc. Matthieu-Marc, being a cook, was a person of imagination and emotion. You conceive his manifold feelings when an angry patrol beat out Colonel Stow's quarters and in two short minutes he learned that his master had been cast into prison, had got out of it and vanished. He sought Alcibiade half the night through and found nothing of him either. He wept; he abused Alcibiade for the good fortune of sharing his master's woes, and wept again.

The morning brought worse tribulation. Rupert's battered, decimated horsemen poured into the town to brag that they had been betrayed. Soon the busybodies of Oxford—or trace it if you will to my Lord Digby—put facts together to make a tale and presented Colonel Stow as an infamous traitor, the very murrain of the King's cause. Matthieu-Marc had to hear it. He expressed his immediate emotion by knocking a scrivener's head against the tavern wall, and after, in the meditations of solitude, performed the like operation for his own. He was tumultuously distressed.

You are not to suppose he believed anything against his master. It was the vision of a slander attacking his master's nobility that moved the foundations of his soul.

He was a cook in grain. If he fell an easy prey to the higher passions, he had a keen zeal for the practical. Now, Colonel Stow had fled, but left his goods

behind him. Since they called him traitor, they would soon lay hands upon his goods. Plainly it was necessary to get them out of Oxford. And whither? There was but one place—the father's house at Stoke Mandeville. And when the property was lodged in safety, a man could seek out its master. Matthieu-Marc began to pack.

In the course of daily business, Molly heard from troopers who loved sweets that they were beaten and Colonel Stow a traitor. "Lud be kind," quoth Molly. "It needs no traitor to beat you." Concerning Colonel Stow she had truly no opinion. Treason and war were children's games that did not interest her. She believed in him for other matters. And she had her own reasons for wanting to know where he was. She sought out Matthieu-Marc.

He was in Colonel Stow's quarters. He was filling bags and baskets. "Lud a mercy!" cried Molly. "What art doing?"

Matthieu-Marc with every desire to tell a lie felt circumstances against him. "I—I arrange our possessions," he said. "I—I dust them."

He was horrified to observe Molly subside upon a basket with distorted countenance. She emitted a wail.

"My pretty soul!" he protested pathetically. "This is quite unnecessary. Tell me in what way you are ill?"

"You are going to leave me," Molly lamented.

"Alas! Mademoiselle, I say alas! I mingle my



tears with yours. But we must bow to destiny." And he cheered up.

Molly took her hands from her rosy face and looked at him. The sight appeared to increase her grief, for she ran to him and cast her arms about his embarrassed neck. "O, I can not bear to let you go. Can you bear to go from me?"

"Not in the least," said Matthieu-Marc, keeping as far off as he could. "But I have to. I have to go to my master."

"And how can you think to get all that gear past the sentries?" cried Molly, who, being at least half a cook, had her share of the practical mind. "Why, they call your colonel a traitor in every alehouse. They'll seize every dud of his. They'll strip you bare as a worm."

"Let them essay!" cried Matthieu-Marc, and, shaking her off, struck a martial attitude. Then reflection came to him, and he relaxed and regarded her dolefully.

"Where will you be going, my dear?" said she.

"To his father's house by Stoke under Aylesbury. And then to find himself."

"'And then to find himself,'" Molly repeated in a low voice, and laughed. Then she clapped her hands, crying, "I've a plan! I've a plan!"

Like most of the higher strategy, it was simple enough. The miller's man from Sandford, who sold Molly flour for her cakes, had a kindness for her. ("Another unhappy!" groaned Matthieu-Marc.) He

would be in Oxford with his wagon that day. Colonel Stow's goods could go under the tilt, Colonel Stow's horse be ridden by the miller's man. Matthieu-Marc could ride under the tilt with the baggage or slip out alone.

Matthieu-Marc, who had the cook's distrust of other people, elected for the tilt, and so it was done.

All went smoothly. The good folk of the inn winked at the wagon and the miller's steed, but they were friendly enough. Matthieu-Marc hid himself effectively—it was not hard for his girth—and without challenge they passed the bridge. All had gone smoothly as a butter sauce, thought Matthieu-Marc, when he heard with stupefaction the jovial voice of Molly.

Peeping under the tilt he beheld that buxom maid sitting comfortably on the shaft. She was hooded and girt for a journey. A bundle and staff reposed beside her. The miller's man, crying to the wagoner at the head of the team, ranged his charger alongside. "Do 'e tell, now, Molly," said he, "who be the furriner?"

"Sure, who should he be?" cried Molly. "Would I come for any other man? 'Tis my blessed husband."

"Haw, haw," quoth the miller's man.

Matthieu-Marc tore his hair.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

### FRIENDS

WHEN the last word was said to Cromwell's prayer, when he rose with shining face, it was Ireton who thought it worth while to give special charge that Colonel Stow should be well guarded. Royston looked out of the corners of his eyes. Colonel Stow was bound on a lame horse and borne away through the night to Thame. Skippon, that tough veteran, jogged off to see Royston's dispositions and go the rounds. Cromwell and Fairfax let themselves think of sleep. But Ireton still peered about among the dead.

You'll not envy Colonel Stow that night. Perhaps it was the best of his fortune that his body cried out against him for weariness and pain. So in some measure the turbulent misery of his mind was curbed. But he was whining to himself of his ill fortune; shame for his weakness burned into him, and he felt himself branded with dishonor, dying a villain's death. He cursed all men and arraigned God.

Doubtless he had not lost all. He had spoiled the devices of King Charles. Against all odds he had

won that fight. It was something of achievement to take down to death. But he had paid for it dear. O, there was a malign mockery in fate. Every chance and change of circumstance fought against him. When he ventured his all for an honest cause, when he worked the Puritans' safety, he must needs appear their assassin. The facts condemned him. No truth could save him, for who could believe the truth? Nay, for all the world he was damned as a villain. He who pretended to honor and the soldierly heart was proven no better than a hired murderer. He must be that to all who knew his name, father, brother, comrades, friends, a vile shame to them all. It hurt him ludicrously. He had many a year conceived himself matter for pride. He let himself laugh like a man under the knife. The good souls for whom he had strutted in a showy chivalry—God save them! That Puritan parson's daughter, who thought him a kind of god . . . that girl of the pure brow . . . would she be at the hanging? At least she would know him for a gaudy hypocrite and a villain.

It was a sweet, comfortable thought. But he made it come again and again, for it hurt less than the rest. The rest . . . Ay, at least he might have been spared George Royston's eyes. That stung beyond other pain. What he had lost—life and all else; what the world proclaimed him; it irked little beside that, having no honor to wear before the friend who had betrayed him. A bravo

of the camp, a hireling for murder; he was that to Royston and the woman . . . the woman. He seemed to hear them laugh together. Lucinda was not merciful . . .

Mercy! God, he was fallen low to think of mercy from her! But he was crushed with shame. They would sneer at him for as ready a traitor as themselves without the wit. Fool, fool, fool! O, God be good to a man who wants respect from other men! He had set his soul upon that. Though he fought for a failing cause, ay, even if his own designs blundered and went awry, he had been proud of bright honor, resolute to guard it to the end, and in that resolve glad of life. Glad! He laughed at that, so that the Puritan guards rebuked him for a lewd man of Belial.

O, doubtless, he had done nothing unworthy. His honor was bright still for his eyes. What use? What profit for a man to be honest only for his own soul? With each nerve jarred and torn by the night's wild chances, with his mind sick of effort and the rack of strife, he felt common hatred crushing his heart out, *peine forte et dure*. He was weak, O ay, he was weak. Pray God for the refuge of the weak.

Surely there was no hope of good in life. All things conspired against him with devilish craft. When he did good work, it was broken by another's folly. When he would keep his cause from villainy he was hurled into the mire of it. When he would save his foes from death they branded him a mur-



derer. No hope, no hope, save to be out of it all. Was God God indeed, or the devil, in this world where good bore the fruit of vileness?

Raving so, half mad, it may be, with the body pain and weariness and the impotent rage of his baffled mind, he was borne through the coldest hours of the night. The Puritans flung him into the town lockup at Thame and left him lying on a truss of straw. Sleep came soon, but a feverish sleep with a devil's dance of dreams.

The other gentleman whom you might suppose most troubled by the chance of the night was in no such case. Colonel Royston had seen all his hopes go down the wind. His generals had contrived to keep alive, and he was but their trusty servant still, and like to stay so. A man could not play such a game twice. The chief command was out of reach. Between him and it stood three lives at the least, each as good as his. But he did not rage. He took the turn of the dice with a shrug and a silent oath or two at Strozzi's bungling throw. One matter only troubled him—the situation of Colonel Stow. He was surprised to find his friend in such an affair. To him, indeed, it was no vast villainy, but he could not well conceive Colonel Stow taking it so lightly. There was no doubting his eyes. Colonel Stow had been in it, and being a person of importance must know all about it. That reflection worked upon Colonel Royston.

If you expect emotion of him, you will be much

disappointed. It was in the nature of the man that he should not stop to feel when there was need of thought and action. Only twice in his life, I think, a passion bore him away from the plain, practical, profitable task, and for each time, it may be, he was afterwards sorry. His first concern was to secure his own safety. But he had his feelings. If he could contrive Colonel Stow's as well, he would be the better pleased.

Since Jerry Stow had been fool enough to be captured, there would surely be some inquest on him. In that was danger. He knew all, and it might well be for his profit to tell all. Colonel Royston felt himself on the edge of an abyss and looked down at it calmly. You should do him justice. He would venture something for his friend. But his own danger was instant. Once he thought of a trick to set Colonel Stow free that night. It was alluring, for so he linked their fortunes, so he served both, so with a fair appearance of friendship he provided for himself. But he dared not. He was too near suspicion already. What then? Suppose a court martial met and Ireton's lawyer brain at work. All the plot was like to come out. Colonel Stow could have no profit in telling less than the truth. Himself had been taken in the fact. He was not likely to spare others. Nay, why should he? Royston sneered at himself. Faith, the man had small reason for kindness. It should be some pleasure in his ruin to drag Royston down, too.

Colonel Royston confronted the situation a while, hunched together over a camp-fire, and at last saw a way. He lay down in his cloak and slept at peace.

You find him early in the morning standing over the straw that made Colonel Stow's bed. His strong, dark face moved queerly as he looked down at that storm wracked body—the clothes all dragged awry, slashed and stained, the matted hair, the blood and filth on the bruised cheek. . . . He set his hand on Colonel Stow's shoulder. It moved wearily. Colonel Stow turned over and looked up at him with heavy, dull eyes, muttered something, stretched his limbs painfully and staring still at Royston, sat up on his straw. "Well?" he said in a listless voice.

Colonel Royston sat down beside him.

He laughed. "Faith, this is a condescension in the soldier of the Lord."

"O, I am not come for jests," cried Royston.

Colonel Stow laughed again on the same high note. "I'Gad, I am sorry for it. There is much matter of jesting here."

"Look you, Jerry. I know well enough I have dealt scurvily by you. I can not give you the past again. By God, I would that I could—"

"I thank you, O, I thank you. Pray enjoy the present."

"Enough of that. Man, think where we stand, you and I. We are both on the brink of peril."

"Both? What has your majesty to do with me?"

"Zounds, why will you talk like a fool of a wit? You can make me smart, I'll allow you that. You have the right, too. But now we have to think of our lives."

"Is that all?" said Colonel Stow. "You may have mine."

Royston swore. "We can win through yet, if you'll have sense. O, I know you can hang me if you blab. Maybe you would like to, and by God, I could not blame you for it. But if you hang me, you hang yourself. No man but me can save you."

Colonel Stow laughed. "Kind sir, conceive that I want no salvation."

"Faith, Jerry, I have been a bad friend enough, but I swear I am true now. For the sake of old days—the old days—hear me out. They will have a court martial for you. Let this be your tale: You know naught of any plot of murder. You know naught of any treason here. You were bidden only to join in a night surprise and you came with the rest. Then I'll strike in and swear I know your honor, and you'd not mingle in aught ignoble or unsoldierly, and I'll bring you off."

All the while Colonel Stow was staring steadily. "No treason here?" he repeated. "No plot to murder? What talk is this?" Royston saw contempt come in the grave eyes. "Ah, you were the rogue let Strozzi through the outposts," he said and laughed. "I might have known. There would

hardly be two of your kidney. I make you my compliments."

Royston swore. "O, curse your foppery. I am what I am. But you were deep in the murder, too."

Colonel Stow laughed again. "Well, I do not look for you to understand. Good sir, conceive that my enduring comfort is to have spoiled your plot. And prithee, be gone. You are something nauseous."

"What do you mean?" growled Royston, flushing. "What were you doing with Strozzi?"

"I preserved you both from the sin of murder. Try to be grateful."

Royston took a step back and glowered down at him. "You came to spoil us?" he muttered.

"And in fact I did spoil you."

"Zounds, it can not be!" cried Royston. Colonel Stow shrugged.

"Do you suppose I care what you believe?"

"Why, then?" Royston stammered. "What are the generals to you? How is it your affair?"

"Good sir, you are not able to understand."

"Ods heart, you do not spare me much," Royston muttered and flung back his head like a beast in pain. Colonel Stow laughed. "What! It was you fired those shots then?" Colonel Stow smiled and heard Royston grit his teeth. "*Höllendonner!* How I cursed the fool that did! What a pox was it to you, then? Had you fallen out with Strozzi?"

"Nay, I find Strozzi less a rogue than others."



Royston frowned heavily. "What in hell is it then? Are you out with King Charles at last?"

"O, sir, it's not within your understanding."

"Ay, you would have your stroke back at me," Royston muttered and strode up and down the room. "You'd break up my plan. Od damn me, it's fair."

He was arrested by Colonel Stow's laugh, and turned glaring. "Pray believe that you count for nothing," said Colonel Stow. "I knew of you as little as I care."

There was silence a long time, and far apart the two men eyed each other, Royston in his sturdy soldierly neatness, Colonel Stow in his rags and his dirt. Royston's swarthy face was working and shadows passed his eyes. But Colonel Stow was all calm and he smiled with a sneer. "Well?" said Royston hoarsely.

Colonel Stow laughed. "O, be at ease! You may live for me. You make me proud."

Royston came close. He looked long into those grave eyes that wore neither love nor hate. He felt the iron of scorn. . . . Muttering something he flung away to the door. It was long before he could make it open. Then he turned to look again at his friend. He saw that sneering smile again. He groaned and hurried out.

Colonel Stow leaned back on his straw, not much the happier. He had conquered indeed, if that were anything. They had come soul to soul and it was not he who had been humbled, if that brought any

comfort. To him the right and the joy of scorn. He conquered. I'gad, it was a sweet triumph. The man who had fought with him, taken life of him, who had been more than blood brother, ranked with Colonel Strozzi's hired murderers. Sure, that must be heartening. Before the man had played him false, but this was a far blacker depth of villainy. Why, the fellow even bore to whine and pray for life. His soul turned sick with loathing. That, that was the best of a friend he had won. Sure, life was worth while!

## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

### COLONEL STOW IS READY

**I**N the morning, in Holton House, the lieutenant general expounded scripture. The commissary general honored him with the seraphic gaze of one whose thoughts are far away. The general was not pretending to listen. The sergeant major general was stealthily gone.

The lieutenant general was moved to song and Fairfax shifted uneasily.

Woe's me that I in Meshec am  
A sojourner so long,  
Or that I in the tents do dwell  
To Kedar that belong.

"Lo, you then!" says he with indignation. "Do I speak vain words for a pretense, even as the Pharisees use? Nay, brethren, verily. Where is my dwelling place? Even in Meshec, which is being interpreted, 'Prolonging,' for the Lord prolongeth my trial. Even in Kedar, which signifieth 'Blackness,' for I dwell in the blackness of my own

sin. Yet of a surety the Lord forsaketh me not. O, sirs, let's make a joyful noise! Though He do prolong, though my sins be as scarlet, yet He will, I trust, bring me to His tabernacle. My soul is with the Congregation of the Firstborn, my body is stayed upon hope. Verily, verily, no poor creature hath more cause to give thanks than I. I have had plentiful wages beforehand, and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord hath accepted me in His Son and given me to walk in the light. He it is that lighteneth our blackness. O, sirs, one beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it. Blessed be His Name, for shining upon so dark a heart as mine!"

Fairfax crashed his fist on the table. "The more I think of it, the more damnable a thing it is," he cried.

Cromwell gasped. "Woe unto me, woe unto me, that you should say so!" and he beat his breast.

Fairfax was much embarrassed. "Good lack, sir, I mean nothing against you. I was not heeding your very godly words. My mind was upon the surprise of last night."

Ireton woke up. "A strange business, sir."

"Most surely a vile plot," cried Fairfax. "Surely they designed to murder us, that they might fall on a masterless army."

"You are marvelous acute," said Ireton with something of a sneer. He did not love discoverers of the obvious.

"I would that I knew what villain planned it," said Fairfax.

"Verily he is drunken with the blood of the saints!" said Cromwell in the tones of inspiration.

"We will hold strict inquiry of this prisoner," Fairfax went on. "Ay, faith, I'll question him roundly, and have the truth out of him before I hang him." Ireton, who had seemed about to speak, said nothing. "We meet at noon, then, gentlemen." They saluted and he left them.

"There goes the honestest head in England," said Ireton.

Cromwell marked the tone. "You speak with two tongues, Henry."

"Why, sir, none but a very honest soul would give a trial to the man he has sentenced already."

"What! Would you spare the Amalekites? His blood be upon his own head! I would have hewn him down last night."

"And to-night you would be sorry."

"What do you mean, lad?"

"Are you riding into Thame, sir? Then let us ride even unto the Amalekite."

What the commissary said upon the road you may judge by what he said to Colonel Stow.

The better by the use of a pail of water, Colonel Stow stood at the grating of his cell, trying to see the sunlight and the sky. Ireton came in with Cromwell. Colonel Stow turned. "You will come before a court martial at noon, sir," said Ireton,



watching him keenly. Cromwell stood off a little way.

Colonel Stow laughed. "Is that necessary?"

"You have nothing to hope, then?"

"Nay, sir, I have nothing to fear." Ireton's eyes were keen, but it was not they that made him change his place. He felt the trenchant steel gaze of Cromwell.

"Death," said Ireton.

"I thank you for that," said Colonel Stow, and laughed again.

"Fellow, you have met me before," cried Cromwell.

"I had the honor to upset Your Excellency in Newbury market."

"Ay, but you were on an honest venture then."

"And now an assassin," said Colonel Stow gaily.

"Are you?" said Ireton, and paused a moment. "Come, sir, be plain with us. If we thought you no better than you seem, we had not taken the pains to seek you out. You can make your case (I tell you frankly) no worse than it is. But I profess I believe the truth may serve you. Let us have it, then. Who planned this affair of last night?"

Colonel Stow caressed his moustachio. "You found me an assassin, I do not think you will find me a traitor."

"Be not deceived!" Cromwell thundered. "God is not mocked."

"Truly, sir, no. Nor are you God."

"I should be glad to know of whom you took your orders?" said Ireton.

"I do not doubt it the least," said Colonel Stow amiably.

Ireton linked and unlinked his fingers, watching steadily. "I should be glad to know—by what road you came to Holton House? Where you passed our outposts?"

"But I can not express how little I want to tell you."

"Man, man!" cried Cromwell. "Are you ready to die?"

"God knows, sir. But I have no desire to live."

"Bethink you of the damnation of hell!"

"Sir, it can be no more disappointing than the damnation of life."

Cromwell made a gesture of casting him off. "You do not take us friendly, sir," said Ireton in mild complaint.

Colonel Stow laughed. "Dear sir, it is not my vocation."

"And yet you stood our friend last night," said Ireton sharply, and was not sure whether Colonel Stow hesitated a little.

"Why, if you can believe that, you can believe anything," laughed Colonel Stow.

"Pray, why did you fire those shots?"

"Each moment I regret more heartily that I missed you."

"You were not firing at us."

Colonel Stow appeared amazed. "Good sir, do you think me out of my wits? Prithee, was I shooting at the popinjay or the morning star?"

Ireton frowned. "Do you tell me you came to murder us?"

"Does your intelligence need telling?"

"I think you are strangely anxious to be hanged, sir."

"Sir, conceive that I ask nothing of you and will take nothing from you. I have done."

"Then, sir, by my faith, this tone means death."

"I thank you," said Colonel Stow.

Ireton stood looking at him a long while, his brow bent, striving plainly with an enigma. Cromwell plucked at his arm and they went out.

Ireton began to speak and checked himself. "What now?" said Cromwell.

"Sir, I doubt I have been wrong. It is naught but a reckless bravo who values his own life cheap as another's."

"Say you so?"

"I profess I have no kindness for this levity. Sure, sir, it is a worthless soul that spends itself on witty answers in the hour of death."

"I have seen a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," said Cromwell.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

### LUCINDA IS LOGICAL

COLONEL Royston was gone to his wife's lodgings.

Lucinda came to him quickly. She was just risen. A loose gown, all gray green like apple leaf, gave him the warm comeliness of her neck and all her grace. Her eyes shone softly like flowers in the dew. Her rich hair hung all unbound.

Royston, who sat huddled together, his head on his hand, turned and looked at her and laughed.

"Well, sir?" she said eagerly, her cheeks flushed, her hand upon her trembling bosom. "Is it—do I belong to a conqueror?"

"What were you ever for but yourself?"

She came a step nearer, leaning toward him, and her eyes began to flame. "Have you failed?" she said in a low voice.

He laughed again. "You have failed, madame. You are beaten." There was something of hate in his grim mirth. "I'gad, I do not know that I am sorry."

She had drawn back. "Failed!" she said.

"Ay, madame, failed. We have sold our souls

for nothing. The murderers were beat off. The generals are safe as you. I am no more than the colonel I was yesterday. Or less, if they fix suspicion on me. Ods life, it would be amusing. Which man would you fawn on then?"

"Failed!" she said. "O, I have been a fool!" Her cheeks were pale again and seemed to have fallen thin; her lips drawn back so that he saw her teeth; her eyes blazed with a tawny light. "You—you dog—what I have given you!"

Royston made a great roar of laughter. "Ha! Does it tickle you so? Are you moved, madame; are you moved?" He came to her in one swift stride and took her bare arms in his grip. She tried to wrench them free, struggling this way and that, panting, biting her lips. But the swarthy hands only bit harder into her flesh and he smiled down in her mad eyes. "Do you guess who balked us? Who has beaten you? Your dear love, Jerry Stow."

"Stow?" she gasped. The straining muscles were limp in his hand; her face, her neck, were all crimson; her eyes shrank from his; her bosom rose and fell in long shuddering waves; he saw beads of sweat come upon her brow.

"Ay, I am glad that you can suffer," he said and let her go.

She sank down on a chair and hid her face. "Tell me," he could hardly hear the words. "What was it? How? How?"

"O, it's a sweet tale for us. Strozzi found his



way safe enough and caught them at Holton fairly. But Jerry Stow chose to make himself of the party. God knows why—whether the thing offended his righteousness—he is Quixote enough—or he wanted to have his revenge on us—he has blood in him. At least he spoiled the whole. I think he started them fighting among themselves. I know there were shots. Harrison's horse heard and a troop of them came at speed. When I rode up all Strozzi's fellows were fled or dead and old Cromwell putting up a psalm. There's your noble plot, madame."

"Where is he?" she said hoarsely.

Royston flushed. "You have an affection for him now, have you? You'd go back to his arms? Be easy. He would not take you!"

She gave a queer, cruel laugh. "Affection? I would that I saw him dead."

"Ay, you ever had strange ways of love," said Royston, watching her eyes.

"Will you torture me?" she cried, stamping her foot. "Where is he? Where is he?"

"That is the cream of the whole," said Royston. "He was the only one of them taken alive. The generals count him one of the murderers. They have him in guard here."

She drew in her breath. Her cheeks were dull white and her bosom still. "Then he can tell all," she said in a low voice. "He can ruin us."

Royston laughed. "Yes, we are proudly placed. We professed him love and friendship and be-

trayed him. Then we go on in villainy till we have to whine to him to hide it and spare our noble lives. Mercy of him! By God, madame, you have made me honor myself!"

There was wonder in her eyes. "What is all this?" she said with honest surprise. "Why do you play at words? If he blab to the Puritans we are undone."

"Faith, you'd not easily find another husband."

"O, words, words," she cried with an impatient gesture. "What is to be done, fool? Have you no resource?"

"Ay, madame. You shall be laden with me yet some while. We are safe enough."

She waited a moment, looking at him full. "How then?"

Royston gave a wretched laugh. "I have seen him. I asked——" the voice was unsteady and he swore vehemently—"I asked him to spare us." Lucinda broke out laughing and pointed the finger at his shame. "Devil, do you take it so?" he muttered.

"Well, and how did the saintly soul answer?"

"Ods blood, I could wish he had bidden us to hell!" cried Royston. "Be at ease, madame. We concern him no more than any other ill vermin. He'll not strike at us. He'll be silent. He'll spare us. That is his revenge. By God, he could take none crueler."

"Fool," said Lucinda smiling, "fool. Yes, I see

him in that. Silly, mad Quixote. So he'll be hanged, then?"

With some hoarse cry Royston strode to her, flung one arm about her and caught her throat in his grip and crushed her with ruthless strength. "You fiend!" he said hoarsely, and she bit her lip for the pain. But she put her arms round him and while he hurt her, clung to him close. At that he flung her off.

She stayed herself against the wall, panting, breathless, still all grace. "Do you like to know he is alive?" she said, laughing.

Royston turned away with a groan.

She ran to him and cast her bare arms about his neck and circled him with lithe, fair strength and clung to him and kissed him. A little while he struggled to put her off. . . . He failed and she had her will.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

### COLONEL STOW IS AWAKED

THE story of the night passed from lip to lip, and the army was in a frenzy of scriptural wrath. Colonel Stow became Judas Iscariot, which had dwelt in Sodom, and must meet the doom which David devised for the people of Rabbah. The good townsfolk of Thame were calmer. They chattered with delighted interest of the chances and changes and how all was done and what might have been—speculations which gave them sweet thrills of terror.

It was with blent sections of romance and fervor that the tale came to Joan Normandy in the hospital. She heeded little at first. She had her work. But a tawny sergeant of Desborough's coming to have his head dressed woke her heart. "And they do say," says he, "that the lewd fellow they have taken is own brother to our Major Stow and as like him as a twin. Which I wunnot believe. For there be sheep and there be goats." His head was dressed in a hurry.

Joan Normandy, in trembling haste, with a wild medley of hope and fear clashing in her heart, sought out David Stow. She was beginning a march

to his regiment's camp at Shabbington when she found him riding in with other officers. He did not see her; he was distraught amid the talk of the others, and she cried out: "Sir, I have an errand to you."

He checked at the sound of her voice, saluted and drew apart.

She awaited him, wide-eyed, lips parted. "Is it your brother?" she breathed.

David Stow flushed. "Will you come to the house?" he said and keeping his horse to her pace, rode beside her without word spoken.

So they came back through the shade of the churchyard limes and round to the wide street. It was a gay morning of mellow sunlight. When he dismounted, his wife came running to the door, smiling glad as her name. But he was very grave. "Why, I think Joan is always to bring you to me!" she cried, holding out for Joan both hands.

"Come in," said David Stow gravely.

They were hardly in that neat, light room before Joan moved from Joy's arm and, "Tell me!" she cried, her voice quivering, "Is it your brother?"

"It's true," said David Stow.

"What do you mean?" she cried fiercely. "He was in the attack? He is taken?"

"He is taken. He was of the murderers," said David Stow.

Blood surged to her cheeks. "It is a lie!" she cried.



"I would give my life that it were," said David Stow.

"How dare you say it?" Joan cried, all aflame.

"Would to God that I could say other—that I could believe other! What way is there? He came with a party stealthily by night, fell upon the generals. What is it but murder? He was taken in the fact. The thing is patent. If there were but suspicion—if there were but doubt—" he made a gesture of despair.

Joan was struggling for words. "I—I—how dare you? I can not endure it! How dare you say so? O, a brother should love him and honor him. And you, if you have not heart enough for that, sure you know him. You must know him. He would not do basely. He could not."

David Stow shook his head. "He was taken in the act," he said in a wretched voice.

"Can you say nothing but that?" cried Joan Normandy. "Have you seen him?"

"What use?" groaned David Stow.

"O, no use, if you are so well content now. No use if you long to think him base. But what if he have another tale to tell? Will you let him be branded with this shame?"

David Stow looked at her miserably. His wife's eyes, too, were full of tears. "O, child, I can not blame you. I protest to God, it wounds me no less. He was very near to me. But what help is there? The thing is plainly a murder and he was among

them that wrought it. O, he hath been miserably beguiled by that vile court. . . . We—we must pray for him.”

“Pray for him!” cried Joan with such scorn that the soldier shrank back. Her bosom swelled. She seemed to tower above him. “Ay, truly, let us pray—let us pray for false friends and cowardly love and feeble faith. I would that you were in his place. He would show you a man’s part then. You—you pray!” There was a moment of angry, scornful laughter, then in a whirl she was gone.

Husband and wife looked at each other and she fell on his breast, sobbing terribly, “Joan—my poor Joan.”

But if it be true that who wants no pity needs none, they should have spent none upon Joan. She knew no pain. Her heart beat with a wild delight. She could no more think him false than herself false to him. Throbbing to the vehement surge of life, passionate with faith in the good rule of God, all glad and strong of heart, she could not fear his condemnation. Surely the truth must be known and his honor proved. And now, now that he was captive and forsaken of all, now she might go to him without shame. She was almost glad of his trouble if it let her serve him. At least she might see him, look in his eyes, give him heart in his loneliness.

She had no trouble with the guard at the prison. Her nurse’s gown was warrant and half the army knew her well enough to honor her.

Colonel Stow sat at ease on his straw humming some scrap of a ballad—

Cold's the wind, and wet's the rain,  
St. Hugh be our good speed!  
Ill is the weather that bringeth no gain,  
Nor helps good hearts in need.

And he laughed.

The grating of the lock did not arrest him. There could be no messenger of good. A clear voice rang through the fog of despair, "I give you good morrow, sir."

Colonel Stow started up and she gave a little cry of grief. Though he had done his best with himself, he was still something of a wreck. The slashed, stained clothes, the bruised cheek and brow, told her of the pain of the night. But he held himself gallantly. He was the soldier still. "I am at your service, madame," he said gravely.

She held out both hands to him as if she had some wrong to atone. "You are hurt. And I had forgot of that. Can I help?"

"'Tis all a show, child," said Colonel Stow with a crooked smile. He did not take her hands. "It affects others vastly more than me."

"Truly so?" she said, doubting, disappointed. "You should trust me. I have some skill in healing."

"I can well believe it," said Colonel Stow, looking

down at her with grave, gentle eyes. "But you must not waste it on me."

"Waste? I who owe you life and dearer things than life? You know that I do."

Colonel Stow shrugged. "I've canceled that debt, child."

"Have I let you?" said Joan, meeting his eyes steadily.

"Nay, you must pay it to a truer man."

The blood leaped to her brow. "You dare not say it!" she cried. "It is a wickedness!"

"Is it so?" said Colonel Stow listlessly, concerned for his own emotions, not hers. "I mean the best for you. Believe me, madame, if you knew what I am you would not linger here."

"I come because I know," she said quietly.

Colonel Stow moved a little. "Have you all the story, madame?" he said in a changed voice, and his eyes were set and intent, roused at thought of his own plight.

"No, not all."

"Ah!" He drew in his breath and the voice fell listless again. "Go, get it told. You will not come back."

"I will hear it of you, sir."

"You shall hold me excused," cried Colonel Stow.

"And why?"

He flung back his head. "Because, madame—because I am not longing to give you pain."

"I can endure it, sir," she said quietly.



— LESTER RALPH —





Colonel Stow forced a laugh. "You make me mighty vain-glorious, child. I profess I am not now so fond of myself."

"O, sir, then you do wrong," said Joan in a demure voice.

It startled him. "Faith, I am glad to amuse you," he said savagely. His nerves were raw. "You shall have more mirth. Listen! In the dark of the night a company of hired bravos, whereof I was one, came to murder your generals. We came near to succeed. But a troop of your horse overcame us, slew many and scattered the rest. I was taken alive."

"I knew all that," said Joan quietly, looking straight into his eyes.

"You knew?" Colonel Stow repeated, staring stupid surprise. "You came—you held out your hands to me—you knew?"

"Do you think I believed?" she said angrily. "What do you think me then? Did you doubt yourself?"

Colonel Stow was silent a while. "God forgive me, I did," he said slowly.

She gave a little scornful laugh. "You!" she said. "You!" and held out her hands again. Colonel Stow took them and kissed them. She pressed them against his lips. "For me—for me—you may tell me the rest or not as you will. It is so little matter. I know."

Colonel Stow let fall her hands. "I have no

right," he muttered and turned a little away. "I have no right."

She laughed miserably. "Why, then I am shamed indeed," she said and then cried out. "What is it you mean? Tell me!"

Colonel Stow came close to her. "Child, you must see. I have little chance of life and no honor left me. Truly, you put trust in me yet, but who else is there? It is but a strange, fabulous tale I can tell and if it will save me at the court, I doubt. Surely it will never clear me to the world. If I live it is for a known knave, an assassin. I profess I want no such life as that. I had rather make an end."

"You dare?" she cried fiercely. "O, 'tis better to be red with sin than to be afraid of life. Honor, do you say? And shall it be no honor to bear the dishonor of men? O, sir, I think no manhood is proven save after the manner of Christ, which was oppressed and was afflicted, yet went on His way doing good. Is't not truest honor to be held dishonorable among men, yet do always the works of honor? Is not that true strength and the way to win glory of God?"

Colonel Stow drew away from her. There was new wonder and reverence in his eyes. But she, all rosy and trembling with a pure passion, her own eyes shining through tears, saw nothing of that. Colonel Stow bowed his head. "You are braver than I, child," he said.

While they stood there silent, she watching him

as a mother yearns over a child, the door was flung open with a clatter and a sergeant's guard broke in. "You fellow, you are to come before the court! Hey! What is your work here, nurse?"

Colonel Stow stood erect. "What is ever a nurse's work, good fellow?"

"A corpse is not worth\*it," quoth the sergeant. "March!"

## CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

### A HUSBAND OR SO

YOU have to lament for Benaiah Jones, corporal of horse, a victim of early rising. When Alcibiade was ridden down in the route of Rupert's horsemen he lay stunned and much bruised. He waked to life again in the dawn with Benaiah Jones fumbling at the pockets in the region of his stomach. Benaiah Jones was upon the godly errand of spoiling the Amalekites, and such was his zeal that he rose before dawn to prevent riches falling into the hands of unrighteousness. It happened that Alcibiade was ticklish. He woke to see the fat jowl of Benaiah close above his own. His disgust is reasonable. He expressed it with passionate zeal in a blow at Benaiah's chin. If he had had his whole strength Benaiah would hardly have risen again. It sufficed to bring him oblivion. Benaiah clucked a little and became livid.

Alcibiade sat up and blinked. He ached in various places, but laborious experiment failed to find a fracture. He considered possibilities. It was in the first place not a possibility to sit still. The next saintly plunderer might well have steel ready. But



it was hardly a possibility to tell where to go. Colonel Stow might be in a hundred places in the world or even out of it. If anything might be probable, he was probably with the Puritans or dead. Alcibiade, who was a sanguine person, preferred to believe in the Puritans, and remembered then that the Puritans had at least Colonel Stow's brother, a pleasant if respectable person. Alcibiade elected for the brother.

So you find him limping up to the Puritan outposts and enquiring after Major David Stow. He was bitterly questioned and his answers so wildly ingenious that they sent a guard with him to Shab-bington. David Stow, as you have seen, had gone to Thame. So that it was late before the surly escort presented him.

David Stow looked the plump, bedraggled figure up and down. "What do you want of me?"

"My master," said Alcibiade.

"What have I to do with him?"

"You have the honor to be his brother."

David Stow made an exclamation. Then to the escort: "Wait you without. I will answer for him," and when the door was shut: "Now, good fellow, when did you leave him?"

"Smoking his pipe after yesterday's dinner, sir, in his quarters in Oxford. I came back at dusk to find he is thrown into prison. Why? For quarreling with the King, they say. I go as you would yourself to take him out of prison and find that he is

escaped. You remember a M. Gilbert Bourne, whom he rescued from you? *Bien!* M. Gilbert Bourne had rescued him from the King and they were away together. Whither? I followed them on to Wheatley and came upon Rupert and was ridden down in the rout. I have but lately come to my wits and seek you to seek him." He looked with surprise at the swift emotions changing on David Stow's face.

"Thrown into prison by the King?" David Stow repeated. "He would scarce be seeking a desperate service for him then. God, what does it all mean?" A triple chime of the quarter hours rang over the town. He started up. "Nay, come, come, they have been trying him long." And he hurried Alcibiade to the door.

"I do not understand," said Alcibiade with dignity. "Who has the insolence to try my master?"

"Man, there was a company of murderers attacked our generals last night and my brother was taken among them."

Alcibiade became stately. "Permit me to tell you, sir, that you are mad or you lie."

"I am mad, I think," cried David Stow. "Come, come, you must tell them all," and hurried him into the house of my Lord Williams, where the court was sitting.

It is necessary to consider also the other gentleman in whom Molly was interested, a gentleman of more peaceful fortunes, but hardly less distressed, a victim of unrequited love.

As the shadows lengthened in the first of the afternoon, Mr. Stow, astride a full-barreled cob, rode back from his barley. Out of the diamond eye of the sun a miller's wain was coming to meet him. In front thereof marched a lean man and a girl in no part lean. They were plainly at violent argument, being further exhorted by a man on horseback behind them. Mr. Stow, with more surprise than pleasure, beheld them turn by his yew hedge and away to the yard. He arrived to find the lean man unloading bundles from the wain, while the lady assisted him with affection.

"What a pox!" said Mr. Stow, not without excuse. "Hey, you are the Frenchman who kissed my cook."

"Never!" cried Matthieu-Marc, while Molly wailed the faithlessness of men. "I am the brother of all good cooks. But yours—no, she has no soul."

"Then why do you come here, my friend?"

"In few words, sir, hear a sad tale. I am the servant of your son. I can declare that I live only for him. Last night my colonel was cast into prison by the King. Why? I do not know. He swiftly escaped and fled from Oxford. Remained his property. Lest that should be seized I removed it by strategy. Sir, it is here in your guard."

Mr. Stow said something to himself. "And where will Colonel Stow be gone then, my lad?"

"*Helas, monsieur,*" said Matthieu-Marc, turning up his eyes.

"Well, who knows?" said Mr. Stow to himself,

and drew a long breath. He has not a hasty mind. Keen and kindly he looked at Molly. "She will not be my son's property?"

Matthieu-Marc coughed. "The lady informs me, sir, that she is my wife."

"And you?"

"It would be ungraceful to deny it," said Matthieu-Marc.

Molly made a courtesy in his direction and a more serious one for Mr. Stow.

"Come in, come in," said he, "you will be fasting." He shepherded Molly and the miller's man before him, but Matthieu-Marc lingered. When they turned by the kitchen door Matthieu-Marc on his master's horse was already some way down the road. He waved his hand through the sunshine.

Mr. Stow stood still, gazing at him till he became a black speck against the glare. Then he wiped his eyes. "Sure, he is a dear," said Molly beside him, "and I could wish he were not."

## CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

### COLONEL ROYSTON DELIVERS HIS SOUL

IN a long, low room of dark beam and wainscot Sir Thomas Fairfax had gathered his officers. The sunlight breaking through the hundred diamond panes of the casements, woke the scarlet and steel, made the shadows gloom black, played quaintly about the stern jaws of holiness. Fairfax had the head of the table, his pleasant dark face resolute and something self-satisfied. To the right Cromwell leaned his head on his hand and fidgeted and muttered scraps of Scripture to himself. Ireton was beside him, frowning and scribbling over much paper. Upon the other side old Skippon sat and yawned. There was Lambert, the square-headed Yorkshireman, and Fleetwood's lean fervor, and Desborough of the honest yokel's face, and Ludlow and Whalley and the ruddy, comely Harrison—every officer of note in the army. By Ireton—no comfortable neighbor—sat Colonel Royston, heavy and still, his full face set in hard lines.

"Gentlemen, there is no need of much words," said Fairfax in his loud frank voice. "Myself was



at council with the lieutenant general and the commissary and the sergeant major at Holton last night when a company of bullies set about us and butchered the good fellows that were with us and came so near ourselves that but for a troop of Colonel Harrison's we had been sped. It was at the same time that the King's horse fell upon our lines in a hot attack, wherein we have, under God, to thank Colonel Royston's dispositions of his dragooners. Sirs, it is plain this is all a horrid plot. They would murder your generals and assault a masterless army. One of the fellows that beset us hath been taken. We have him here and I doubt not you will be short with him."

There was a mutter of assent. Ireton looked up from the paper whereon he had been drawing something not unlike Colonel Stow. "And with your leave, sir, we may learn of him who was behind this plot; whether the knowledge of a thing so damnable touches any in high places."

That hint at the King was relished. There was muttering and Harrison cried out: "Verily, verily, he is drunken with the blood of the saints."

"This thing is a low villainy," said Fairfax, with some disdain. Respect for royal persons was bred in him. "Bring the man in."

Colonel Stow came in between two pikemen and saluted the court, looked calmly round upon eyes of contemptuous hate.

"Your name," said Rushworth, the secretary.

"Jeremiah Stow, lately Colonel of Horse in the King's army."

"Sir," says Fairfax, "I think you were of a party that made a murderous attack on myself and other gentlemen last night?"

"It is within the knowledge of many, sir."

"And this was no fair act of war, but patently murder?"

"I do not deny it."

Fairfax sat back in his chair. "Do we need more, gentlemen?" he said, with contempt.

"Nay, for it is written, 'smite Amalek and utterly destroy,'" said Fleetwood with unction.

"It is also written that sinners make haste to shed blood," said Ireton sourly. "And by your leave, sir, I need some little more." Fairfax waved his hand. "Sir, 'tis within your knowledge that none of us bore pistols, having left the same in our holsters." Fairfax nodded. "Yet, of the fellows who were slain last night two have bullet wounds, the which I remarked to the sergeant major."

Skippon rolled in his seat. "And so it is. But there never was a fight without strange happenings."

"So that plainly there were shots fired by another hand than ours. And these were not let off at us in a venture. No man who sought to do a secret murder would do it by pistol fire. These shots were meant. I think Colonel Harrison will tell the court it was the sound of the firing roused him to send his troop to Holton."

"You speak the truth," said Harrison.

"Therefore, I present to the court that the man which fired those shots had another design than our murder."

"He stands there," said Cromwell, pointing with big, red, bony hand across the table to Colonel Stow.

Colonel Stow saluted. "I thank you, sir."

"This is something fine weaving, methinks," said Fleetwood with a sneer.

"The commissary goes back to his old trade," quoth Lambert. "This is a lawyer's tale. Another lawyer would answer it all in a moment. The man was taken with red hands in a murder. What's all the rest? Whoever knew a fight where no bullet went awry? This man was fool enough to fire and fool enough to shoot amiss, as he hath been fool enough to be taken alive. His folly hath spoiled their villainy. But I protest I have no more mercy for a fool than another."

"That surprises me in Colonel Lambert," said Ireton blandly.

"Nay, but there was never a fight without strange happenings in it," said Skippon, "and I can not tell why they should save a rogue."

There was a loud murmur of assent. They were not looking for innocence. Lambert's heavy, blunt arguments crushed the lawyer's subtleties; indeed, no soldier was likely to need more than the plain tale. One of the murderers lost his head—fired—was captured. It was more like truth than any re-

finement. It carried them away. Ireton, glancing round the table, reckoned the verdict with keen eyes and shrugged. He looked curiously at Colonel Stow, who surprised him by a smile.

Colonel Stow saluted Fairfax. "Sir, I, too, have something to say."

"Why, how now?" cried Cromwell with a start, and Ireton began to caress his chin.

"It is your right," said Fairfax.

Royston moved heavily and, turning at the sound, Colonel Stow saw his face and its agony. It hardly inclined him to mercy. But for the sake of old years, for his own pride, for a hundred mingled memories and desires, he could not give Royston to death. There was another whose shame must be covered. Gilbert Bourne had taken him from prison to save the King's honor and for the King's honor died. His own faith was pledged to the dead. The King's part could not be told. For the rest he was free and would fight. He began to speak and Royston's eyes were set on him in a grim stare of pain.

"Sir, I thank you. I bear a name of some honor among you and, though I be your foe, I have never brought shame upon it. I would call to witness your officers who have had passages with me that I have ever observed the right rules of war."

Then Fairfax cried out: "Faith, I remember you! You were in that affair by Towcester."

"I think, sir, I lost no honor by it?"

"Sir, I am sorry to see you here."

Colonel Stow bowed. "Well, sir, you recall that. In this present I thank the commissary general for his honorable testimony. I will make a plain tale short. Yesternight in Oxford an officer of the King's guard, Captain Bourne, came to me with the news that an Italian bravo, Strozzi, had ridden out on this venture of murder. It was plain to Captain Bourne and myself that such a plot must bring shame on the King's cause, the which we had in high regard. But the fellow was gone and we could not stay him by orders, nay, it was but a chance, of riding at the best of our speed, we could reach you in time to balk him. I do not pretend, sir, that we had any peculiar kindness for you. We sought to preserve our cause from the infamy of this foul deed. Riding *ventre à terre*, we came something rashly upon the Italian's troop and in the affray Captain Bourne was slain. He lies by the roadside on Shotover. Before he died he bade me ride on for the honor of the King. Sir, I did my possible. I caught up Strozzi's company as they were running in upon Holton House. It was over late to warn you. I fought for you. I did what, under the providence of God, sir, was your salvation. I would have you remark there were shots fired before Strozzi came within the house. They were mine. I had four pistols, my own and my friend's, and they were all shot off before I was beaten down. Pray, remark again, it was not Colonel Harrison's troop, nor your swords, but Strozzi's own men, that smote me. That



is all, sir. Let me say, whatever befall me, I did my part. I saved you."

"With a very pretty tale," Lambert sneered.

"Let's have less of worldly honor and more of God's righteousness," said Fleetwood.

"Wherein lies the one way of thriving," said Harrison, with unction. "O, sir, let's not be beguiled with the glories of man's seeking, which are a fleeting show."

"Let's abide by our business," said Ireton sharply. "Come, sir, this was well said and I tell you plainly it suits well with what I have seen. But we must have more. You heard of the plot in Oxford. Did you hear who made the plot?"

"Captain Bourne told me of none but Strozzi. We knew him for a fellow of no scruple."

"Ah, Strozzi," said Ireton, with a curious intonation, "and who stood behind Strozzi?"

"How can I tell?" said Colonel Stow, with a shrug. "He is a fellow that works in the dark."

"Do you know who devised the plan?"

"On my honor, sir," said Colonel Stow, with some relief, "no. It is like Strozzi himself."

"Do you know any but Strozzi who knew his design?"

Colonel Stow hesitated a long while, staring at the ground. This was the very thing he feared, but he had not looked for such damnable directness. Well! He was pledged. He would guard the honor of those who themselves would not guard it. It ill

became him to blab. "Sir, I am here to answer for my own part, not others," he said slowly.

Ireton made an impatient sound. "I ask you again," he cried. "Do you know of any but Strozzi who knew the plot?" Colonel Royston moved noisily in his chair.

"I have answered that," said Colonel Stow.

"I warn you, sir," cried Ireton angrily, "you do yourself wrong. Deceit is your worst enemy. Subtlety shall ruin you. Integrity never will. Will you speak?"

"I will speak anything of myself," said Colonel Stow.

"I ask you a last time. I do solemnly profess to you, you have no hope but in telling all. Who was in this beside Strozzi?"

"I have answered."

"And I have done!" Ireton cried petulantly, and flung himself back and with a wave of his hand gave up the affair. But Royston was swaying to and fro in his seat.

"It was time," quoth Lambert. "The rogue is but playing with us."

"Make short, make short!" cried Harrison. "Let him be turned back for a reward of his shame."

Fairfax leaned forward again. "Do you say more, sir?" he asked gravely.

"I have done," said Colonel Stow. "It is not here I am judged."

"I give you little hope," said Fairfax and signed

to the sergeant of the guard. But Cromwell was muttering and trying to speak.

They were leading Colonel Stow out when Royston sprang to his feet. His chair went crashing down. He stood erect, the biggest man by far, crimson, with flashing eyes. "No, by God, no!" he roared. "I'll deliver myself." He strode heavily down the room, spurs and sword clanking, and halted in Colonel Stow's place. "I'll give you light, sirs. Why is he silent? Why is he choosing death? To keep safe a villain that once he called friend. He would die for me. By the blood of God, I am bigger than that! Hark ye!" There was little need of that, for he held them like men in a trance. "Colonel Stow and I, we were true friends for a dozen years till I betrayed him. We were both with the King. I forsook him for my own profit and for my own profit sought to ruin him. The lieutenant general will recall how I bought honor of him with news of a King's convoy. It was my friend's command. I came with a treachery, and with a treachery I go. I did not rise fast enough in your army. Ay, gentlemen, I am a better soldier than any man of you, save one, though you have not the wit to know it. Well. I wanted a higher place. Ods heart, I was worth it. There came to me this devil Strozzi with a few thousand pounds if I would put him in the way to kill off the generals so that Rupert could have us at advantage. I took him. It was I gave him news of your Holton council. It was I

prescribed him a way through the outposts. And yet, by God, you shall do me reason! It was not the money I needed. I would have given him no victory. You know who beat off Rupert last night. With the generals down who would have been master of the army to-day? Ask yourselves that, gentlemen!" He hurled at their amazement a rough laugh of defiance. "But for Colonel Stow I had done it. Those damned shots of his saved you, as they spoiled my plan. Faith, you may thank your God for him. Do you think there is another Quixote in the two armies mad enough to spend himself to save his foes? By Heaven, I had bubbled you all but for him!" He turned on Colonel Stow with reckless eyes. He had put off shame now. He was his own master. Colonel Stow saw him smile. "Ay, he has thrown me. I am beat. And now, so please you, he'd take my shame. . . . Curse me, I have some soul, too." He plucked at his belt and loosening it, flung sword and all clashing down. "There's what no man of you is man enough to take against my will!" And he laughed at them again.

It was his hour. He mastered them. The grim, saintly Puritans, who knew no fear of less than God, whom no reward would have suborned to his treachery, they shrank before him. His stark, rough strength mocked at them in wanton delight of itself. In that storm of wild vigor their virtue was abashed. Some one muttered of that old serpent Satan and Royston stood there, towering above them heavy and

tall, the mellow sunlight falling quaintly on his drawn brow and the full dark face gave them the contempt of a mocking god. They dared nothing. He was far above them all. Even Colonel Stow at his side, watching him with a great love, was little matter. He proved himself upon them. Their wills were bound. Life was worth living for that. . . .

Ireton was first to break himself free. "You profess yourself traitor?" he said sharply.

"Little words, little man," said Royston with a smile.

"You shall find no little doom, sirrah," Ireton sneered.

"What you can do, will it make me fear?" Royston sneered.

Then Fairfax started up. "Away! Away!" he cried, flushing. "Nay, keep Colonel Stow apart. Let not the honest man be defiled."

Colonel Royston made them a salute of mockery ere he turned.

Colonel Stow hung back and lingered in the doorway. While the sergeant strove to keep them apart, he held out his hand to his friend. Again they looked in each other's eyes, and so were parted. Not in sorrow or any shame. The last hour had worn all that away. The tide of happiness came upon them swift resurgent. Past treasons were no matter. The last trial found each man true. Their souls were free. They stood together invincible of the powers of death and glad. . . . Glad. . . .



## CHAPTER FIFTY

### THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL SPEAKS

**I**T WAS Fleetwood who began devoutly whining: "Why dost thou show me iniquity and cause me to behold grievance, O Lord? Verily, though they dig into hell, thence shall Thy hand take them."

"The which is a sweet and savory comfort to Israel," said Harrison with unction.

"Nay, but the Lord hath sent serpents and cockatrices among us and we are black," Fleetwood complained.

"O, sirs," said Desborough, with simple fervor, "'tis sure a great honor unto us that the Lord hath taken thought to preserve us from such a devil."

At this Cromwell made strange noises, but when they looked for him to speak there came nothing. His face was near purple and he bit his lip till the blood lay upon his chin.

Fleetwood began again: "It is written in the book of the Prophet Hosea——"

Ireton made an exclamation and turned noisily to Fairfax: "Well, sir, and what say you to Colonel Stow's part now?"

"Why, by my faith, I have done him much wrong. I would hold it honor to call him friend. I——"

"Honor! Honor!" cried Fleetwood. "O, sir, what a tinkling cymbal is the honor of men. Let us ask if he be a savory member and you shall find——"

"A weaver of webs, a thing of subtleties," quoth Lambert. "Hear me, sirs. This corruption of manifold designs likes me not. It is written: 'He that is not with us, is against us.' That suffices."

"It is written in the same book," said Ireton sweetly, "'he that is not against us is with us.'"

"Sir, let plain men be the judges of villainy."

"And folly pass sentence on crime."

"This is unworthy," said Fairfax sharply, and Lambert muttered. "Why, gentlemen, it's surely clear this Colonel Stow hath done us great service at peril of life and that in the clean impulse of honor. We have been hardly preserved from doing a horrid wrong. But as for the other, for Colonel Royston, I do profess——"

"Pray, sir, shall we not have done with Colonel Stow first?" said Ireton with the advocate's instinct.

"Why shall we find two mouths? Sure all will pronounce him guiltless."

"Nay, sir, my conscience will not have it so," groaned Fleetwood. "I suspicion him an Amalekite in grain."

"O, your conscience," Fairfax muttered. "Will you wait your turn, sir?" He turned to Cromwell. "How say you?" Cromwell started as if he had

heard nothing. "How say you, sir, of Colonel Stow?"

"He shall not fail or be discouraged," said Cromwell in a strange voice of dreams.

It took Fairfax a moment to apprehend that. Then he turned to old Skippon. "If I understand him," growled Skippon, "which I do not, he hath served us. Acquit."

"It is my mind that he hath done us more service than we can well pay," said Ireton.

That was enough. Desborough and Whalley followed their leaders faithfully. Harrison had enough fire in his own wild soul to honor a knight errant. They carried it. Fleetwood and Lambert snarled in vain.

Colonel Stow was brought in. "Sir," said Fairfax, "we have done you wrong and you much service to us. I thank you. You are free to go where you will. I pray you rest in this town a while. I would know more of you."

Colonel Stow saluted. "Sir, if you count yourself to owe me anything, I would it might serve my friend."

Fairfax shook his head and when Colonel Stow would have spoken held up his hand for silence. "You can do no good, sir," he said gravely.

Colonel Stow saluted again. Indeed, he had no hope. The law of war could not permit less punishment than death.

When he was gone Fairfax broke out in a hurry :

"Here's ill work to do, gentlemen. Let us make short." But the righteous gentlemen drew together with relish. Now there was no occasion for mercy. They were free to be the executioners of Jehovah. And their own moment of weakness fired them to revenge. "Few words," said Fairfax. "When I spoke first of treachery I had little thought the blackest traitor was of ourselves. 'Tis the vilest thing I have known. A manifold devilish falseness. How dare we accuse the enemy, when they find one of our commission double their villainy? This Colonel Royston. Bah! Let's have done. Are we of one mind?" He turned to Cromwell. But Cromwell waved his hand and the question went to Skippon.

"Give him a halter," growled Skippon.

Ireton nodded.

Fleetwood had no notion of so brief a verdict. The occasion was altogether delectable. "O, sirs," says he, licking his lips, "this is a great villain and hath deceived us by those deeds which he had power to do in the might of the beast. Yea, he hath the mark of the beast upon his right hand and upon his forehead. But worthy, worthy is the Lamb, and lo, we are preserved even out of the hand of his wickedness. For his sins have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembrance of his iniquities. He shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; yea, the smoke of his torment shall ascend for ever and ever, and he shall have no rest day nor night."

"Colonel Harrison?" cried Fairfax, snatching at the first pause.

"Of a truth, sir, he stinks and is corrupt. He hath troubled us. The Lord shall trouble him. Let him die the death of Achan."

"I would all treason were as clearly known as this shall be swiftly punished," said Lambert.

No man gainsaid.

"There is one voice, then," said Fairfax in a hurry, loathing the task. "Have him in!"

But Cromwell clashed his clenched hand down on the table. "I'm absolute for life!" It came upon them like a cannon shot from the unknown. They were held stupefied at gaze. "What, shall we be more righteous than God? Will you condemn the penitent thief? Why, sirs, this man is in a higher way. He hath not waited for the cross and the hour of death. We held him of the saints; we had never known his sin, but that he humbled himself unto us and made confession. We cry out upon him. I wish none of us may be so deep in sin. And now are we to use his repentance to his death? I profess I will go to the limit of my strength against it. Nay, this is to assail the majesty of God. Unto Him the man hath committed his case. O happy choice! Surely he hath liberated his soul. But he is not penitent? But he boasts of his sin? O, sirs, who gave you eyes that see men's hearts? I tell you, I have seen weak men endued with strength, strong men like to suck-



lings in an agony of spirit. Man, man, is it for you to order how the grace of God shall work within a man? He hath a brazen forehead, you say? Let him have what he will before men so he wear nothing but meekness and truth before God. And what if this very bold boasting be but an armor to hold men off from his private passages with his Lord? I would know who dares hold him wrong. Look to it that you judge not in a private anger. He will not humble himself unto you, and you are chafed. Go, tell that upon your knees."

"All which may be very well," said Lambert stubbornly. "But I know well the man is a traitor at heart. Ask Ireton there if he did not ever mistrust him; and so have I. This is but a trick to save the fellow he calls friend and himself, too, if he can."

"Of a truth I have ever seen guile in him, and now am well confirmed," said Fleetwood.

"Are you so? Have you never gone amiss in reading the hearts of men? O, sirs, I beseech you by the bowels of God, conceive that you may be mistaken! Believe a man may not be of your temper and yet acceptable to God. Believe he may traverse strange ways and bring forth fruits meet for repentance at the last. He hath sinned; O, ay, he hath sinned deeply, and there must be punishment. Sir, I declare as I hope mine own salvation, if we commit him to death I would rather be himself than one of us. If God had determined his death would He

have moved the man to repentance? Of a surety he was granted repentance that he might have time to work the works of repentance. He is overgood a soldier of God to send to death. Do I say then he shall have no punishment? Nay, truly. He hath not sinned unto God alone, but unto men and unto men he must atone. . . . He may not command in the army of the Lord till he hath purged his offense. This is my sentence then: He shall be taken from his office and made a common soldier; ay, and upon hard service. Let him be sent to Colonel Monck to the Welsh war. There by the grace of God he shall approve himself. It's an easy sentence? It's a light punishment? Nay, speak not so foolishly. What's death to him? He hath made his peace with God and in death finds all his hope. Life is the doom, life wherein he must serve God in warring with sin, where temptations crowd upon him all day, and that old serpent lies waiting for his weakest hours, life that is the trial wherewith he shall be tried anew. I sentence him to life. So may God do His will. That's best."

The good Desborough was forward to second him, and Harrison cried out: "This is the naked simplicity of Christ."

"I will not deny it," quoth Fleetwood. "Let the Lord be judge."

Lambert shrugged. "It is your way, not mine. I'll take it for your account."

"O, John Lambert, John Lambert," cried Cromwell, "it's not I that shall answer for your sentence."

"So be it!" said Lambert in a moment.

The others followed, though you would not guess Ireton well pleased. "I am out of all this," grunted Skippon. "I am a soldier."

Fairfax turned to Cromwell. "You have gone something beyond me, sir, but I'll not deny you. Let him live and God help him. Do you choose to charge him? I do not see my part in it."

"Nay, sir, nay," said Cromwell hastily; "this is your office."

"Well. Have him in."

Royston came erect, unashamed. Fairfax met eyes as fearless as his own. "Colonel Royston, you have convicted yourself of a vile treason. It is the sentence of the court that you shall be stripped of your rank and all your honor and serve as a common soldier. You will go under guard to Colonel Monck and be at his orders."

Royston was plainly amazed. Then all his strength was shaken. He fought hard to command himself. "I—I do not know that I should thank you," he said hoarsely. "But I thank you." So with his head fallen on his breast, he went out to make his life anew.

When the Puritan fervor had burned itself out, when Monck felt the time come to change sides and strike for Charles II, there was chief among his

aides a Colonel Royston. You can trace him very active and adroit in the underground work of the Restoration. In the rotten government that came, in that foul court, you hear of a Sir George Royston very prosperous. And if ever you come upon Lely's portrait of him you see a strong man, sated and weary, who rated life low.

## CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

### THE LAST INSPIRATION OF LUCINDA

LUCINDA sat in the twilight. There was not a nerve of her at rest. Her bosom beat a broken melody. Her hands were at work with her rings and her chain. She changed her cushions and her posture each moment. Royston tarried too long. She had no fear for him. Though he failed her, she had never doubted of the final victory of his brutal strength and adroitness. She feared him too much. But she was hungry for certain tidings of the other's fate. To be sure of his death—that was the best thing life could give. So she might quench her hopeless yearning, win freedom again, be again the mistress of her own body and mind and use their old delights. She hated him as a prisoner his bonds. He dared impose himself upon her passion and chain her with regrets. His death must be no mere revenge, though that were sweet, but release, full freedom of all herself. She could not dream of love reaching beyond the grave.

While she fretted there, sudden, silent, a man stood before her. Colonel Strozzi saluted with a grin.



She lay back on her cushions still and quite calm. "You are bold," she said. "I think you do not know Colonel Royston." And she laughed. "Good sir, he will get you hanged as lightly as I breathe."

Colonel Strozzi continued to smile. "There was some little matter of a contract, madame," he suggested. "And for hanging, why not he as well as I?"

Lucinda shrugged daintily. "Faith, I know not, nor care."

Strozzi came a step nearer. "Be sure, madame, that you will not laugh at me."

"You are more amusing than you suppose, my poor friend."

"Yes, you have cheated me neatly. It is admitted. And now the last act begins. Last night your *bel ami*, George Royston, sustained the attack of the Palatine. I hear his dispositions were most soldierly. In fine, he shone resplendent. But there was a contract, Madame l'Amoureuse, and this is not what he was paid for."

"Blame yourself for your own folly," cried Lucinda. "You were given your chance at the generals and you blundered it."

"That is another hare, my dear," said Strozzi pleasantly. "I choose to run down the first. There were certain moneys paid. I am not used to pay for nothing and I do not like it. The position, sweetheart, is this: George Royston has played double with me and it is a liberty I do not permit."

He will convey back the money he had or I will convey the whole story to the generals."

"And so get yourself hanged!" Lucinda laughed. "Yes, sir, I believe that."

Strozzi smiled at her. "You do not understand me, my dear. I resent being cheated. It is true that I may get myself in some danger. I shall not care, if I cry quits with that dear Royston. Believe me, my love, I shall. If he will surrender, the better for him. If not," Strozzi's amiable smile broadened, "the more pleasure for me. Shall we hang together, dear? Zip! La, la, la, la!" He made the sound of the jerking rope and danced a grotesque parody of the writhing body.

Lucinda watched, very still. "Why are you so bitter against him?" she said. "It was not he, it was Colonel Stow that spoiled your plan."

Strozzi's smile was swiftly gone. His eyes gleamed hate. "Another of your damned lovers!" he said. "Your desires are too general, mistress." Then he laughed again. "Well, he is paid. Fat Tom broke his skull in before the lobsters came."

"You fool," said Lucinda quietly; "they have him here alive."

Strozzi spat a hissing Italian oath. "But you lie!" he cried. He gripped her neck and turned her face roughly to what light there was. "Do you not lie, strumpet?"

While their eyes fought there was the sound of footsteps in the flagged passage below and a voice:

"Mistress Royston! Mistress Royston! Is she within?"

Lucinda started up. "It is Ireton!" she said in a swift whisper, and flung open the door of her bedroom. "Go in, go in!"

"Into the holy of holies?" Strozzi sneered as he went.

Then she threw herself upon the cushions again and composed herself with much grace. But her bosom was wild and the heavy foot on the stair maddened her with its delay.

It was Ireton. He bowed to her with a grave respect. "I come on a sad errand, madame. Pray, believe my regret."

"Why, you talk riddles, sir!"

"The answer is short enough, madame. Your husband has lately confessed to a horrible treason."

"Confessed!"

Ireton looked at her curiously. "Ay, madame; finding a friend of his, a Colonel Stow, of the King's army, in danger by his offense, he confessed all to the generals in council."

There was silence a moment. Lucinda drew a long breath. "Sure, that is mighty noble in him," she said in a low voice. "But, pray, what had he to confess?"

"Madame, you have heard that a wicked attack was made upon the generals last night. At noon a court was held to try a prisoner, this Colonel Stow, for his share in it. He told an honest tale, but be-

cause he would not say what he knew of the guilty, was much in danger, was like to suffer. Then, moved by his peril, Colonel Royston did confess all. That himself was a leader in this devilish design, having sold himself to one Strozzi, an Italian, to procure the generals' murder."

"O, sir, what mighty villainy is this!" (Ireton did not understand her tone.) "Yea, and in the very camp of the godly!"

"I—I feel for your shame," said Ireton.

"You are most gracious."

"'Tis at least some pleasure to add that the court found room for mercy. It was held that Colonel Royston's honorable confession did absolve him from the common doom of traitors. Only his command is taken from him; he is to fight in the ranks."

"This is mercy indeed," said Lucinda in a low voice.

Ireton, peering at her through the gloom, could see that she sat at her ease, still and unshaken by any sorrow. "I would say only this beside: If I can serve you in your present need, madame, I would desire it."

He waited a while. She answered nothing. He made his bow and left her. She was much of a puzzle to him, but since his own taste was for a daughter of Cromwell, she occupied him little.

In what torment he left her you may guess. If pain in another be the due of pain, Colonel Stow's griefs were well avenged. This last blow smote

most bitterly. It was enough that he should bring to nothing her scheme of grandeur. To win back the friend she had stolen from him—he could have dealt no crueller wound. She knew shame. Each hour that she made herself the plaything of Royston's desires came back to sting her pride. He cared no more than she. She had given her all and at the first chance he turned back from her to his friend. They made of her a wanton of the camp. The sweat was on her brow and she trembled. Truly he had his revenge. He kept his own honor, he kept his friend's love. Ay, she had won that friend to her husband, but he made the very victory pain. She was left to a common soldier that loathed her. She moaned under the lash.

It was not of her nature to try the past again, to seek how she had been in fault or hold herself to blame. She was a creature of passion and unconquerable will. Now the pain lashed her into sharper hate. She gathered herself together and crouched upon the cushions like a wild beast waiting to spring. . . .

So Strozzi found her. He tapped her shoulder before she saw him.

"You heard?" she said hoarsely.

"It seems the *bel ami* has cheated me again."

"He! What does he matter? He is but a fool. 'Tis the other has beaten you—this cursed Colonel Stow. Do you not see?"

"I see," said Strozzi.



"Well! 'Tis he is our ruin. He spoils all and gains by it. They acquit him; they honor him; these fools. Are you a man? Do you dare?"

"Do not be afraid," said Strozzi.

She started up. "Do you need anything? Are you equipped?"

Strozzi laughed.

## CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

### LUCINDA GOES OUT TO THE NIGHT

LUCINDA stole out. Night lay heavy and dark and the broad street was still. The New Model army suffered no roysterers nor loungers. But it was early yet and many a window shone with homely light.

She had her plan. Ireton had been amiable. A pathetic tale to Ireton would doubtless find out where Colonel Stow might be. But she had no need of it. In an upper room, his face sharp outlined between her and the light, she saw the face that haunted her. She shrank back into the shadow, gazing with greedy eyes. Ay, it was he. The clear peal of his laughter came through the open casement and she shuddered. That was his brother at the foot of the table and by his right hand, smiling, demure—you may fancy the words Lucinda found for her—Joan Normandy. Hate spurred her shamed heart anew. She heard the pleasant, happy nothings of intimate talk and sped away like a ghost frightened of human things. He dared—he dared be happy!

To that dark chamber where Strozzi waited she came breathless. Only a plump gentleman strolling

with a contemplative evening pipe had marked her flitting. "I have found him. He is with his brother. Close by the Grammar School. I saw him through the lighted window."

"So." Strozzi gathered his cloak. "That suffices."

"What will you do?"

"*Quien sabe?* I shall not lose him. Good-by, my dear." He took her by the shoulders. "You ought to have been mine, you know. I'll try a taste of you." He caught her to him and kissed her at his will, laughing at the struggle of instinct. "Yes, you have all the tricks. So now, sweetheart, you had best know no more of me. My love to the next man." And he was gone, but Lucinda followed.

He had hardly found the shadow of a dark entry when she was beside him. He muttered a foul Italian proverb in her ear and translated with a chuckle. But she hardly heard. Her mind was set on those happy people in the light. All that had gone before was easy to bear against that . . . Envy and covetousness of sex and fierce mad hate, made hell of her heart. . . .

At last the happy folk were moving. They passed from the lighted room. Colonel Strozzi lounged across the road, wholly at ease, and Lucinda sped after him. The door opened and David Stow stood on the threshold looking out. He drew back and Joan Normandy came, little, gray-cloaked. Then Colonel Stow. Strozzi saw and darted forward

with swift, silent strides, his sword bare, hidden behind him. The door was shut. Joan put her hand in Colonel Stow's arm and they walked on into the dark. Strozzi sped on and Lucinda followed him close.

Even as they passed the door it opened again and Alcibiade came out with a cry: "On guard!" and bounded after Strozzi.

Colonel Stow flung Joan Normandy on and sprang round, plucking at his sword. But Lucinda cast herself on him, pinioning his arm and Strozzi thrust at his heart. The blade sped through Lucinda's side and breast and as Strozzi went down with his spine stabbed asunder and Alcibiade upon him, Lucinda swayed heavily, and her blood ran down upon Colonel Stow.

He held her away from him, peering where the steel was set in her, but she hung lifeless in his arms.

Joan came to him, crying wildly, "Are you hurt? Are you hurt?"

"Nay, not I," said Colonel Stow.

She saw Lucinda's face and gave a strange, passionate cry. "She! She saved you!"

David Stow was beside him now and Alcibiade was up and many a man hurrying.

Colonel Stow laid Lucinda down and drew off his cloak and covered her. "Yes. She saved me," he said.

It was over.

## CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

### COLONEL STOW KNOWS HIMSELF

WAKING late, after a great payment of overdue sleep, Colonel Stow went to the window in his brother's bedgown. The morning mists were gone. Red roof and mellowing tree stood sharp in the sunlight and the grass was a carpet of jewels. Much had passed with the night. He rested in a strange peace, yet hardly dared permit himself rest. . . .

It was Matthieu-Marc beside him with a tray. "Zounds, the Evangelist!" Matthieu-Marc beamed. "How came you here?"

Matthieu-Marc groaned.

"Sir," says he, recovering himself, "I could not believe you would have the heart to eat anything unless I cooked it."

"Faith, Matthieu," quoth Colonel Stow, taking him by the shoulder, "you serve me mightily better than I serve you."

"Now, that is what I complain of," said Matthieu-Marc peevishly. "You always forget your place. And the truth is I came here because of a



comely maiden, a demoiselle of honor, who surpasses her sex, and wants to marry me. Alas! Her one fault, sir. The fly in the ointment."

And Matthieu-Marc told his tale and Colonel Stow ate his breakfast . . .

In the shadow of the church where she was wed they made Lucinda's grave and she lay at rest with roses on her brow. Royston came, but the grave was between him and Colonel Stow. There was no word spoken, for no help lay in words. Royston guessed the truth. But to all others Lucinda died in honor. The thing was plain. Strozzi was the villain. In a rage of revenge for his failure, he had broken into Lucinda's lodging, seeking Royston's blood. Balked in that, he bethought him of Colonel Stow, but Lucinda had divined his intent and followed and paid her husband's treason with her life. Strozzi was flung to a nameless hole in the fields, and over her they set a white stone. True, noble heart!

You may fancy Strozzi in that world beyond the grave with his natural smile . . .

Before the army marched, Fairfax desired Colonel Stow to wait on him, and Colonel Stow, obedient, found him with Ireton—a pair not often coupled. The truth is, doubtless, that each in his own way—Fairfax a frank, soldierly Christian with no taste for exuberant religion and a strain of reckless chivalry; Ireton who loved the extremes of his own faith not much better than the high Cavaliers and

was feeling already for a band of moderate, practical men—they felt in Colonel Stow a kinship.

Fairfax welcomed him heartily like a proved friend; Ireton put on a reasonable gaiety, and Colonel Stow found himself comparing their ease with the swashbuckler manners of Rupert and the dreary haughtiness of the King. There was something, yet not too much of thanks. Then Ireton, "Since we're frank, sir, I have wondered more than a little what took you to the side of the King."

"Sir, I must allow you to wonder."

"Well, I have never been of those who see no reason of his party. But I think it has been plain for long there is no hope of fair dealing in him."

"You are fighting for that opinion, sir."

Fairfax broke out. "We have nothing to hide, sir. Why should you? Can you fight for the King again?"

Colonel Stow hesitated. But he knew there was no reason. He was for ever done with that cause.

"I shall not, sir," he said deliberately.

"I thank God for it," cried Fairfax.

"You are in the right," said Ireton. "Sir, it's not you desert the cause, but the cause deserts you. There's no place in it now for honest men. The past is past. The only hope for England now is in us. We can bring back the law and peace and strength. Is it worth fighting for? Older friends of the King than you have thought so."

"In fine, sir, will you join us?" cried Fairfax.

Colonel Stow did not answer. Something in this kind he had foreseen, but he was not ready for it.

"We owe you no less than a place of some honor," said Ireton softly.

Fairfax made a sound of disdain. "Sir, you've shown us that no cause could bind you to dishonor. There's a matter above the King's cause or ours—the commonweal of England. Only our victory can serve that. If the King were another—I do not say, and it's no matter. Now who fights for England fights for us." Still Colonel Stow did not answer. "Why, do you doubt of it?" cried Fairfax impatient.

Colonel Stow looked up. "No, sir, not that."

"What is it then?" Fairfax beat on the table. "Speak out, man."

"There is a majority and the first regiment," said Ireton, "if all goes well."

Fairfax stood up. "Well, take your time. Let us hear from you to-night."

"I thank you heartily," said Colonel Stow, and went out.

He was tempted. A regiment in the best army of the world was a splendid prize for his heart. He loved his trade and here was the finest chance to work at it a man could hope. He saw a new fortune given him, another life. He might yet redeem his hopes. Old dreams rose again imperious and splendid. How could he dare deny them? It was to play the coward, to fail himself. If he had

faith in his own manhood, he must challenge fate again. What occasion so fair? Surely he could find no way of life so happy. The chance and strain of war, that was very Heaven to his eager temper and swift mind. Ay, on all counts the prize was good. But he longed for it too much to grasp it hastily.

Out beyond the town on the level road, through the smiling, golden corn, he went, gazing at the sky in thought. Indeed, this fell the very matter of his own desire. He was hungry to prove himself greater than the chain of defeat and plot, to charge again in victory. The old boyish love of flashing deeds rose in him. If he did so much with that rabble of a regiment, in that welter of folly with the King, what might he achieve now? He was the better soldier by two campaigns, by a new skill in hedge-row and highway fighting. He permitted himself joyful vistas of triumph. Fairfax should have a good bargain.

He halted. Why not? What hindered? He was his own man. He owed nothing to the King. His loyalty was freed when he was cast into the gloom of Bocardo. No man could condemn him. He had no faintest censure for himself. Yet he faltered. There was a doubt, a doubt that rose stronger and stronger the more he desired. Once before he had chosen a cause for which he had no faith. He told himself that this was mightily different. It was certain; to any soldier it was certain as day and night, that the Puritans would conquer. Was that enough?

Against his will he knew that he had no more faith in Puritan than King. He could not hold their creed. He could not believe that Englishmen would bend to their over-saintly rule. He saw no peace in their victory.

Half angry with himself for a scrupulous fool that must needs be wiser than the men of his day, half sad, he drove himself to confess that he was made for neither cause. He could not believe in the King; he could not believe in the Puritan; was it so much matter? He was a plain soldier. Nay, but fighting for a cause he could not hold, he had gone too near shame to venture honor again. What then remained? Go back to the corn and the cattle, live for the plow. He gave a doleful sigh.

Surely a man had a right to risk something rather than face that vegetable life. If he ventured honor, why there was something not base in the venture. And while he let the vision of triumph come again, he found himself looking into the maiden honesty of Joan's eyes. Well, and what of her? She had some right to command him, and she would desire him take her cause. If he dared hope for her beneath his heart, sure he must consent to fight for her. That was bare manhood. Nay, what welcome would she have for him else? If he denied her, if he refused her, he knew she would bid him go. She, too, went with the prize. He was tempted.

He had come near the place where he had seen her first. The low thatched houses of Chinnor were



close and above them the beech woods, golden and gray, rose in one close army to the white edge of the sky. He remembered it all. His own gay blood and her passion of righteousness. . . . Ay, he needed her. All the eager strength in him longed for her purity. . . . Sure, there was nothing else in the world made a man so glad of himself as such maidenhood. . . . He might take her if he would swear her faith. Take her and all else that he wanted still. . . .

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

### COLONEL STOW EXPLAINS HIMSELF

HIS brother was waiting for him in plain impatience. Colonel Stow had nothing to say. "The General was to make you an offer, I have heard."

"I have answered it," said Colonel Stow.

"Well?"

"In the morning I go home." He looked up and saw his brother's face. "I am sorry, lad."

David Stow sighed. "You are still against us, then?"

"Nay, not that either. I think I was born out of time. I can find no faith that fits my soul, nor no cause that I dare fight for. And so," he gave a whimsical smile, "and so I will e'en go into my corner and cry like a child because the world has no room for me."

"I would to God that you were one of us," said David Stow passionately.

"And I would thank God for your heart that I might be. Lad, lad, do I not yearn to be all of your cause? There's a thousand desires bid me join

you, and one—above all. Well! Each has his own soul to work out.”

“Unto the glory of God!”

“Ay, unto the glory of God,” Colonel Stow repeated. “Forgive me, lad. I can not find my work in your faith. I can see no fruit in your hopes. The England you would make is no place for common men. You put your trust in a people of saints—”

“The Kingdom of God upon earth!” cried David Stow. “And do you not pray ‘Thy Kingdom come!’ ” He pleaded his creed with a passionate strength. They would beat prelate and King, and each man should be free and use his freedom to do the will of God. England should be a land of stern labor and passionate worship, with no thought of other matter. Ay, and not England only. The hour had come for a new crusade. The army of the saints must go forth into all the earth and conquer all for God.

Colonel Stow listened and his face grew sad. “God help you!” he said slowly. “O, lad, we are not all Cromwells. Who else could work such dreams as these? We have to work for human men.”

Again the brother pleaded with him in the zeal of his religion, quickened by honest love. Plainly their cause was conquering. God made ready His kingdom. The saints should triumph and multiply and subdue all things unto them. In flashes of

strange power he showed a quaint picture of a Puritan England, a Puritan world, behold the will of God incarnate.

Colonel Stow shook his head. "How much would I give to believe it?" he said with a bitter smile. "I tell you I have tried all my strength to-day to persuade myself into it. Ay, came near to cheat my own soul."

His brother was silent. They changed a glance of understanding and lingered together a long while. . . . "Well! I have a good-by to say," said Colonel Stow.

"I am sorry," his brother said. "I am sorry."

At the gate of the hospital Colonel Stow asked for Mistress Normandy, and being admitted, crossing the pleasant turf of the close, he found her. She awaited him, still and very pale. She seemed to have lost something of her charm. He had never seen her afraid before.

"I come to bid you farewell, madame," said Colonel Stow.

"I—I have heard the army marches."

"I go home."

He would not look at her. He heard the murmur of bees among the honeysuckle. The wind stirred lightly in the tree-tops and a faded leaf fluttered slowly by. "O . . . I was told the general would give you a command."

"He honored me so. I find that I can not fight for him."

She drew in her breath. "You are still for the King?"

"Nor that either. Faith, madame, I am a weakling that can take no side heartily, and so slink off."

"You are done with fighting?" she said quickly.

Colonel Stow gave a grim laugh. "O, ay, the sword is a plowshare now and I walk in the furrow. I have done."

"Why, why, then, you will be—quite safe—always," she said in a low voice.

Colonel Stow laughed. "O, yes, I preserve myself. That's vastly pleasant."

"There may be work for you."

"Ay, with the cattle."

"I did not mean to hurt you," she said, and her lip quivered.

"Forgive me, child. I know your heart can not live with sneers. You have been the sweetest thing in my life. Believe me, I have longed to fight for you. But I can not dare. Your faith is not for me. So here's an end. God keep you." He held out his hand.

Her eyes sought his bravely. Blood stole back to her cheeks. "You are in haste," she said.

"There's no more use in words."

"So they must all be yours?"

Colonel Stow allowed himself a melancholy smile. She too would be pleading, then; well, he had conquered his own longing. "I am your servant," he said with plain regret.



"Had you thought I might want to make an end, too?" she said with something of a shy laugh in her eyes. "Not this one?"

"Madame, I would to God that it might be!" said Colonel Stow miserably. "I have used all my strength to be like you."

"Oh!" She was plainly surprised. "I would not desire that."

"I can not be of your army, of your cause, of your faith."

She considered him with eyes grave as his own. "Perhaps you did not desire."

"We'll not talk of that," said Colonel Stow, and avoided her eyes.

Her sigh was something weary. "I do not think God would have every man alike," she said. "And, truly, all can not come to Him by the same way. . . . But, surely, it needs not that they should hate each other?"

"I shall honor you all my life, child," said Colonel Stow. She frowned a little and the wide eyes were troubled. "One does not seek that—that another—should be just as oneself." And on a sudden she was all trembling. "If—if one were let serve and—he cared to help—"

Colonel Stow woke at last. He snatched at her hands and drew her close. As her breast touched his she was still again. He looked down into her shining eyes. She did not deny him, but her cheeks were crimson. "It's for me, child?" he said hoarsely.





But she cried out, she started away. "Ah, no, no! Not unless you need me utterly, unless I bring you life." He smiled a little. "You are not sure and we must not," she cried in a piteous voice. "Unless you are bidden, unless you can no other, I had rather die."

"I have been fighting my heart all day, child," said Colonel Stow. "It's the want of you bade me take the general's commission. I have almost fancied myself Puritan, by Heaven. I have all but played my own soul false, for fear of losing you."

"You!" she said in a low voice of a mother's scorn, and looked at him most lovely, smiling through tears, worshipping.

"It was you gave me desire of life again. It's no worth, child, if you'll not give me life, too—yourself—yourself."

She let him draw her close and he held her and she bowed her head on his breast. . . . She was still and silent a long time, then looked up with a little, quaint smile. "You want me so?"

"I want life and the work of life. I can not find it without you."

"So. It is so," she murmured, and her arms stole about him.

## CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

### THE MASTER OF ALL

THE homestead at Broadfields welcomed them again. It was an afternoon of sunshine when Alcibiade found Molly behind a cow with melancholy. He accused her of it.

"You are jealous," said Molly, "because I am going to be a bride."

"I can certainly never be that," said Alcibiade with a sigh. "Would that I could for your sake."

"And I was thinking," Molly continued, "of my duty to him."

"Poor wretch," said Alcibiade, and left her to it.

He found Matthieu-Marc with melancholy in the rickyard. He praised domestic bliss.

Matthieu-Marc exploded. "I adore it, do you understand? I adore it. What more do you want?"

"It is very gentlemanly of you, my dear," said Alcibiade.

Matthieu-Marc snorted for some time and then became pensive. "Any man that is a man would sell his boots to be her husband. That is true. The cook told me so. She told me so many times. She is no artist either as a cook or otherwise. But I—I



do not even have to sell my boots. Why do you think she wants to be my wife?"

"My poor friend!" Alcibiade remonstrated with such modesty. "Every woman who sees you must want."

"But that will be very embarrassing afterwards," said Matthieu-Marc.

"Marriage," said Alcibiade, "is a proof of faith, a test of love and an opportunity for charity. But the greatest of these is charity."

"Charity," said Matthieu-Marc, "suffereth much. And is blind. I have such good eyes."

"Believe me," said Alcibiade, "they are nothing to hers."

"The more I think of it," said Matthieu-Marc with decision, "the less I understand it."

"'Tis the right mark of a husband," Alcibiade assured him.

At which point Molly, who had been observing them for some time, arrived. "My dear!" she cried, holding out her arms to Matthieu-Marc.

"Precisely," said Alcibiade and accepted her.

Matthieu-Marc swore in joyful French.

But Molly was trembling and crying a little. "Fie," said Alcibiade. "Remember that you are a bride."

"'Tis more than you deserve, indeed," said Molly to his shoulder.

"You may say the same of every man alive. We are all born innocent. Some escape punishment."

Molly laughed down at Matthieu-Marc. "It is his folly, you know, that makes me feel safe with him."

Matthieu-Marc began to sing a love song with fervor.

Thereby attracted, Mr. Stow came across the rickyard and found Alcibiade with Molly in an ambiguous position. "Why, my lass," quoth he with a chuckle, "I thought you had made a mistake."

"If you please, sir, I never did," said Molly.

It was a day of harvest. The sky lay cloudless and lucid, but pale and on the near horizon pearly gray. All the air was still and heavy with ripe fragrance and the cornfield laughed through a golden haze. On the orchard bank, in among the marjoram, Colonel Stow lay and contemplated the world. He was little used to the occupation and it irked, but the contemplative life was plainly his portion, and he set himself to it without pity. Truly his lines were fallen in pleasant places. The great homestead, all crimson and orange, the rich lands of the vale, golden brown to harvest, they were good to see and sure warrant of comfortable days. Ease—it was doubtless something to give thanks for, but hardly the best a man could desire. He looked away to the hills. Vast in the haze and far they stood, like power incarnate, towering with bluff shoulders, stern and dark and bare, above the sweets of harvest. Ay, to them his soul was akin. He wanted the hard life of power, to breath the roaring wind

of fight and break the crash of the storm. The delight of straining strength was Heaven to him. He was granted the life of the vale.

Well! One could take it with a smile. One would not employ lamentations, for one was already sufficiently ridiculous. A gentleman who could find nothing to fight for was plainly too good for this world, like the white pigs one killed before they were weaned. But it was curious. He had not been wont to think himself so superfine. He protested to his conscience he was even as other men and wholly a man of his day, yet plainly there was no cause in it to content him. More thought brought no change of purpose. He was ever the more assured he had done well to draw back. Ay, every hour he was less Cavalier and less Puritan. He would whistle King and Bishop down the wind for a free man's right to his own mind, and for that same right laugh at all the savory vessels of Puritan sainthood. He was confirmed in a zeal of moderation. But that was no standard to rally battalions, no cause for his England. Doubtless a day might come when the land might be weary of either faith, but there was no herald of it yet, and the daisies would be a-flower on his grave before it dawned. He who had prided himself that he was not a man of to-morrow! It was certainly painful to be at odds with his own day.

And still one might take it with a smile. He owed her that. Such as she quelled all the regret of broken

hopes and deeds unachieved. Upon her heart he knew the pure gladness of living, the joy of life because it is life, the most wonderful of all a man knows or feels. She with her dower of purity and quick womanhood—what more dare a man ask of God? . . .

Ay, truly, in the days of dreams there had been wild hours of throbbing delight. They could not fade. God save her! God who gave her into a troublous world with little help. God forgive a man who failed. Well. It was done. . . .

But there was no reckoning between those hours and the new life. Peace had come, not of weariness or sleep, but that perfect peace of the freedom of strength. She needed all and gave all in utter faith, and that became the very life of life. Surely with her there must be joy and the quiet mind to the end. The end? Nay, there could be no end to this. The life he lived with her could not die when their bodies were wearied out. That was the greatest in all her gifts. Of old death had been but death to him; no matter to fear, indeed; rather the bitter herb that gave life keen savor; but still at the last life's poison. Now, it was something kindly and welcome in its hour. When death's task was done, the life she had made must rise at last in the perfect union which the world's way would not suffer. . . .

He turned to see Joan standing with the sunlight on her bosom and her face laughing from the

shadow. Truly the world's way was good. Colonel Stow resigned the contemplative life. . . .

She was in his arms beyond hope, all fragrant, delicately panting, with dark roses in her cheeks, when behold one the noise of whose roaring went before him. It was a small, sturdy child, who cantered upon fat legs, wielding a lance of hollyhock.

"Sir," said Colonel Stow, "who are you?"

"I am St. George," said the child, "and you are the dwagon." On which beast he then howled havoc with saintly zeal. Colonel Stow exhibited a decent terror. But in the very moment of tidy slaughter St. George detected an impropriety. "What is that lady?" he said in cold reproof.

"Sir," said Colonel Stow, "she is the dragon's wife."

"You did not ought to have one at all," said St. George. "I shall take her wight away."

At which the dragon wept.

"That is silly," said St. George. "You ought to wear."

And straightway the dragon ran at him roaring and St. George fled with joyful screams, but returning smote the dragon a mortal thrust in the region of the lower shin, so that he sat upon the orchard bank and gave up the ghost in very delectable groans. "Antony Jewemiah Higgs," said he, "you have been the death of me. Which I think unkind."

"But I have bwoke my lance," said Antony Jewemiah Higgs. "Make me anuvver."



"Sir, you are unreasonable," said the dead dragon.

"But I want it," said Antony Jewemiah Higgs, preserving the absolute calm of monarchial minds.

"That is certainly a reason," said the dead dragon and came to life.

"I," said Antony Jewemiah Higgs plaintively, "I am not allowed to cut fings out of the hedge," and he looked with intent at Colonel Stow.

"But I am," said Colonel Stow, "so you see the use of keeping dragons about you."

"I will not kill you again to-day," said Antony generously.

"It is a consideration. Lead on!" said Colonel Stow. And Antony Jewemiah bounded away. But Colonel Stow lingered to draw Joan to his side. Slowly they went, smiling at the child, silent. Joan blushed, and, yielding all herself to Colonel Stow's insistent arm, was held very close. She let her fair head lie upon his breast. She trembled.

THE END



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